

# Appendix A.

## Definitions

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Beginning with the 1997 survey, most questions had new wording, compared with those used in earlier surveys. Also, new questions and answers categories were added, and all questions were read from (and answers entered into) portable computers. The AHS questionnaire is in a computer program that runs on the field representatives' portable computers. The survey's field representatives were instructed to read the questions exactly as worded. For a discussion of historical changes, see Appendix C. The exact wording of the questions and numerous explanations ("help" screens) are printed in the *Codebook for the American Housing Survey, Volume 3*. For a copy, please contact HUD USER, Box 6091, Rockville, MD 20850 (1-800-245-2691). The definitions and explanations given here are, to a considerable extent, drawn from the questionnaire and the *AHS Field Representative Manual*.

The definitions are alphabetized by the titles used in summary tables. Some cross references are provided, and if a specific definition is not located, try related definitions. The definitions apply to summary tables, and also to the computer files ("microdata"), unless they are marked "not applicable."

**Adults and single children under 18 years old.** See the definition "Household composition."

**Age of householder.** The classification refers to the age reported for the householder as of that person's last birthday.

**Age of other residential buildings within 300 feet.** The respondent was asked to describe the age of other residential buildings within 300 feet of the sample unit. The responses were then classified as: "Older," "Newer," "About the same," or "Very mixed." "Very mixed" indicates that the ages vary. If there are no other residential buildings within 300 feet, "No other residential buildings" is marked.

**Amenities.** See the definition "Selected amenities."

**Amount of savings and investments.** These data are collected only for families and primary individuals with total incomes of \$25,000 per year or less, to indicate how many have substantial assets in spite of their low incomes. Savings include savings in a bank, other financial institution, or money market account. Other investments include stocks, bonds, rental properties, second homes, real estate, antiques, art, certificates of deposit, IRA or KEOGH accounts, and commodities. Investments exclude the primary residence and its furnishings, and cars.

### **Annual taxes paid per \$1,000 value.**

*Books.* Real estate taxes paid per \$1,000 value of the house (and lot, except on manufactured/mobile homes) are presented. Medians for taxes per \$1,000 value are rounded to the nearest dollar.

*Microdata.* Not applicable, can be calculated from taxes and value.

**Bars on windows of buildings.** The respondent was asked if any of the buildings within 300 feet of the sample unit have metal bars on the windows. The condition of the windows has no bearing on this item. The windows might be in perfect condition, but the bars might be there to protect against vandalism. Windows that are boarded up or covered with metal sheeting are not included.

**Bathrooms.** See the definition "Complete bathrooms."

**Bedrooms.** The number of bedrooms in the housing unit is the count of rooms used mainly for sleeping, even if they also are used for other purposes. Rooms reserved for sleeping, such as guest rooms, even though used infrequently, are counted as bedrooms. On the other hand, rooms used mainly for other purposes, even though used also for sleeping or designed as bedrooms, such as a living room with a hideaway bed or a den or sewing room, are not considered bedrooms. A housing unit consisting of only one room, such as a one-room efficiency apartment, is classified by definition as having no bedroom.

**Bodies of water within 300 feet.** These questions determine the proximity of the respondent's property to bodies of water such as ponds, lakes, rivers, or ocean. Swimming pools and temporary pools of water are not included in this definition. The respondent was also asked if the property is waterfront property and whether the property is on a flood plain.

**Building and ground maintenance.** Renters were asked their level of satisfaction with the maintenance of the grounds and building in which they live. The responses could be "completely satisfied," "partly satisfied," "dissatisfied," or "landlord not responsible for ground maintenance."

**Building neighbor noise.** Respondents in multiunit buildings were asked about noise heard through floors, walls, or ceilings of their units. Respondents were also

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asked about the frequency of noise. The survey also asked the respondents' opinions of the loudness of noise as well as whether it was bothersome or not bothersome.

**Buildings.** See the definitions “Bars on windows of buildings,” “Common stairways,” “External building conditions,” and “Year structure built.”

**Business.** See the definitions “Income,” “Other activities on property,” and “Rooms.”

**Cars and trucks available.** Included are passenger cars and station wagons owned or regularly used by one or more household members and ordinarily kept at home. Company cars are counted (if used regularly for nonbusiness purposes and kept at home), as are taxicabs (if they are owned by a household member and kept at home). The total number of vehicles is not published, since cars are counted separately from “trucks or vans.” In the books, to obtain a count of all units lacking cars specifically, the lines “no cars, trucks, or vans” and “other households without cars” must be added together.

Included are pickups and small panel trucks of one-ton capacity or less, and small vans that are owned or regularly used by one or more members of the household and ordinarily kept at home. Company trucks and vans are included if used regularly for nonbusiness purposes and kept at home. To obtain a count of all units lacking trucks or vans, the lines “no cars, trucks, or vans” and “with cars, no trucks or vans” must be added together.

Except for units falling in the category “no cars, trucks, or vans,” all units will fall into two categories. For example, a unit with one car only would fall both in the category “1 car with or without trucks or vans” and “with cars, no trucks or vans.”

**Cash received in primary mortgage refinance.** An owner can receive cash from a mortgage lender by refinancing the primary mortgage. This increases the outstanding balance of the loan.

**Census.** See the definition “Comparability with Census of Population and Housing data in 1990.”

### **Central cities.**

*National books and microdata.* Since 1985, the National AHS has used the official list of central cities published on June 27, 1983, by the Office of Management and Budget as *OMB Bulletin 83-20*. That list was developed from definitions published January 3, 1980, in the *Federal Register*, Volume 45, pages 956-963. AHS still uses these 1983 boundaries for data in the 2001 national microdata file to measure change consistently over time. However, AHS uses the 1990 census-based geography for the data in the 2001 national publication.

*Books and microdata.* Most metropolitan statistical areas had at least one central city, which was usually its largest city. In addition, any city with at least 250,000 population

or at least 100,000 people working within its corporate limits qualified as a central city. Smaller cities were also identified as central cities if they had at least 25,000 population and (1) had at least 75 jobs for each 100 residents who were employed, and (2) 60 percent or fewer of the city's resident workers commuted to jobs outside the city. Finally, in certain smaller metropolitan statistical areas, there were places with between 15,000 and 25,000 population that also qualified as central cities, because they were at least one-third the size of the metropolitan statistical area's largest city and met the two commuting requirements.

See also the definitions “Place size” and “Urban and rural residence.”

**Change in housing costs.** Housing costs include mortgage and rent payment, real estate taxes, insurance, upkeep of place, utilities, homeowner membership fees, land rent, and mobile home park fees. For the householder and those who moved with the householder (from the same place at the same time), comparison is made of the share paid in the previous unit with the share paid in the present residence. The wording in the questionnaire is “their share, if not whole household,” so there may be some ambiguity for someone who used to pay 50 percent of \$100 and now pays 50 percent of \$600, but this is intended to count as increased rent.

**Choice of present home and home search.** These data are shown for units where the respondent moved during the 12 months prior to the interview. The respondent was asked a three-part question on choice of present home: (1) whether the respondent looked at both houses/ manufactured/mobile homes, and apartments; (2) the reasons the respondent chose the present house or apartment; and (3) the main reason the present house or apartment was chosen. The distribution for choice of present home may not add to the total, because the respondent was not limited to one response. See the definition “Reasons for leaving previous unit.”

**Choice of present neighborhood and neighborhood search.** These data are shown for units where the respondent moved during the past year. The respondent was asked a three-part question on choice of present neighborhood: (1) whether the respondent looked for a house/apartment in any other neighborhood; (2) the reasons the respondent chose the present neighborhood; and (3) the main reason the present neighborhood was chosen. The distribution for choice of present neighborhood may not add to the total, because the respondent was not limited to one response.

### **Citizenship.**

*Citizenship of householder.* Place of birth was asked for each householder and every household member. There are five categories of citizenship status: (1) born in the United

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States, (2) born in Puerto Rico or another U.S. outlying area, (3) born abroad of U.S. citizen parents, (4) naturalized citizens, or (5) noncitizens. Native born people are citizens at birth.

*Year householder immigrated to the United States.* The data are based on information reported for the householder and refer to the year the householder immigrated to the United States.

**Common stairways.** Common stairways are usually used by the occupants and guests to get to the doors of the unit. They may be either inside the structure or attached to the outside of the building. The statistics on common stairways are presented for multiunit structures with two or more floors and common stairways. The figures reflect the physical condition of the stairway: the presence of loose, broken, or missing steps or stair railings.

**Community quality.** A community can have one or more of the following amenities for the use of its members and their guests: a community center or clubhouse, golf course, walking/jogging trails, shuttle bus, day care center, private or restricted-access beach, park, or shoreline.

**Commuting.** See the definitions “Journey to work” and “Neighborhood conditions and neighborhood services.”

**Comparability with Census of Population and Housing data in 1990.** The concepts and definitions are largely the same for items that appear in the *1990 Census of Population and Housing* with the following main exceptions.

In the AHS, recent movers are householders that moved into their unit during the 12 months prior to the interview. In the 1990 Census of Housing, mover households were those that moved between January 1, 1989, and March 31, 1990, a period of 15 months or less.

In the AHS, units are classified as new construction if the unit was constructed 4 years or less from the date of the interview. In the 1990 census, units are classified as new construction if constructed in 1985 through 1990.

In the AHS, the number of bedrooms in the housing unit is the count of rooms used mainly for sleeping, even if they also are used for other purposes. In the 1990 Census of Housing, the number of bedrooms is the number that the owner would list, if the house or apartment were on the market for sale or rent.

Data on poverty level in the 1990 census do not contain the income of household members unrelated to the householder. In the AHS, data on poverty level include the income of all household members whether or not they are related to the householder (see the definition “Poverty status”).

Income data in the AHS are based on income for the 12 months prior to interview for those household members 16 years and older. The 1990 census income data are for calendar year 1989 and for income of household members 15 years and older.

Differences between the AHS data and the 1990 census also may be attributed to the method of data collection (mailed questionnaires in the census, personal and telephone interviews in the AHS); differences in processing procedures and sample designs; the sampling variability associated with the sample data from both the AHS and the census; and the nonsampling errors associated with the survey estimates and the census data.

A variety of data on mortgages and owner-occupied properties are presented in the Residential Finance Survey, a specialized study done as part of the 1990 census. Differences include the fact that the basic unit of tabulation in the AHS is the housing unit, and in Residential Finance publications it is the property. Also, all the data in the AHS are provided by the occupant; in Residential Finance publications, mortgage is reconciled with responses from the lender.

**Comparability with Current Construction Reports from the Survey of Construction.** The U.S. Census Bureau issues several publications under the series title, *Current Construction Reports*. The data for these reports are primarily from the Survey of Construction.

The major difference with the AHS is that the Survey of Construction shows counts and characteristics of housing units in various stages of construction through completion. The AHS shows only counts and characteristics of completed housing. Additional differences may be attributed to factors such as the sampling variability and nonsampling errors of the data from the two surveys, survey procedures and techniques, and processing procedures.

**Complete bathrooms.** A housing unit is classified as having a complete bathroom if it has a room or adjoining areas with a flush toilet, bathtub or shower, a sink, and hot and cold piped water. A half bathroom has hot and cold piped water and either a flush toilet or a bathtub or shower, but does not have all the facilities for a complete bathroom.

**Condition of streets.** The respondent was asked if any of the streets within 300 feet of the sample unit needed major repairs. Major repairs needed include large potholes, badly crumbling or deteriorating shoulders and roadsides, and deep ruts. Minor repairs include small cracks, shallow holes, or missing minor surfacing.

**Condominium and cooperative fee.** A condominium fee is charged to the owners of the individual condominium unit on a regular basis. The fee covers any operating and maintenance costs of the common property; for example, halls, lobby, parking areas, laundry room, swimming pool, as well as related administrative costs, such as utilities billed communally and management fees.

A cooperative maintenance fee (also called carrying charge) is a fee charged to the owners of the cooperative on a regular basis. It covers a share of the annual amount

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paid by the cooperative for real estate taxes, mortgage interest, and operating cost. In the books, medians for condominium fees and cooperative fees are rounded to the nearest dollar.

**Consolidated metropolitan statistical areas.** A consolidated metropolitan statistical area (CMSA) is made up of at least two primary metropolitan statistical areas. The microdata identify specific CMSAs. See the definition “Metropolitan areas.”

**Construction.** See the definitions “Comparability with Current Construction Reports from the Survey of Construction” and “Year structure built.”

**Cooling degree days.** See the definition “Heating and cooling degree days.”

**Cooperatives and condominiums.** A cooperative is a type of ownership whereby a group of housing units is owned by a corporation of member-owners. Each individual member is entitled to occupy or rent out an individual housing unit and is a shareholder in the corporation that owns the property, but does not own the unit directly. The corporation may have a mortgage on the whole group of units. The member may have a loan or mortgage to buy his or her shares in the corporation.

A condominium is a type of ownership that enables a person to own an apartment or house directly in a project of similarly owned units. The owner’s name is on the deed, and the owner may have a mortgage on the unit occupied. The owner also may hold common or joint ownership in some or all common areas such as grounds, hallways, entrances, and elevators.

Cooperative or condominium ownership may apply to various types of structures such as single-family houses, rowhouses, and townhouses, as well as apartment units.

**Cost and ownership sharing.** This item is restricted to owner-occupied housing units. Shared ownership is two or more names on a deed or title. Shared costs include only payments designated for mortgage or utility costs (not taxes or insurance), whether paid directly to a mortgage or utility company, or to household members. *Not living here* means that one of the people sharing the ownership or costs is not a household member.

**Cost.** See the definitions “Annual taxes paid per \$1,000 value,” “Change in housing costs,” “Real estate taxes,” “Monthly housing costs,” “Other housing costs per month,” and “Mortgages currently on property.”

**Crime.** See the subdefinition “Neighborhood crime,” under “Neighborhood conditions and neighborhood services.”

## **Crop sales.**

*National microdata.* Data on sales of \$1,000 or more of agricultural products during the 12-month period prior to the interview were collected in rural areas.

*Metropolitan microdata.* Not applicable.

**Current income.** Upon completion of the detailed income questions, respondents were asked, “Is your total family income THIS MONTH about the same as it was a year ago?” “About the same” was defined as within 10 percent, or just cost of living adjustments. If the respondent answered “no,” a second question was asked, “What do you expect your total family income to be in the NEXT 12 MONTHS?”

Current income for families and primary individuals whose most recent month’s income was NOT about the same as a year ago is the “total expected family income in the NEXT 12 MONTHS.” The majority of respondents answered “about the same,” and their current income is therefore defined as the total income of the family and primary individual in the past year.

Current income is not published separately. It is used in the calculation of “Ratio of value to current income,” and “Monthly housing costs as percent of current income.” It is felt that respondents who recently entered the job market, retired, changed jobs, or moved often had a previous year’s income that is too low or high to compare to housing costs.

**Current interest rate.** This item refers to the annual percentage rate in effect as of the date of the interview, not the rate when the mortgage was made, nor any imminent changes of which the respondent may be aware. In the books, medians for current interest rate are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent.

**Current line-of-credit interest rate.** This item refers to the annual percentage rate in effect on current line-of-credit outstanding balances.

## **Current total loan as percent of value.**

*Books.* This percentage is computed by dividing the outstanding principal amount by the value of the housing unit. Medians for loan as a percent of value are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent.

*Microdata.* Not applicable.

**Dependent interviewing.** Dependent interviewing is the process by which data from surveys conducted in previous years are used instead of, in addition to, or to verify data collected during the current interview. The first use of dependent interviewing in AHS was for the item “Year structure built” in the year 1984.

**Description of area within 300 feet.** The respondent was asked to describe the area within a half block (defined as within 300 feet) of the sample unit. The categories include: single-family detached houses, single-family attached houses or low-rise (1-3 story) multiunit buildings, mid-rise (4-6 story) multiunit buildings, high-rise (7-or-more story) multiunit buildings, and manufactured/mobile homes.

The category “Commercial and institutional; industrial buildings or factories” includes all varieties of nonresidential structures—offices, banks, hospitals, prisons, pumping stations, water treatment plants, factories, parking garages, churches, hotels, restaurants, barns, and junk yards.

“Residential parking lots” exclude driveways of single-family homes and parking garages where parking is on more than one level. “Body of water” refers to categories such as lakes, ponds, streams, reservoirs, and rivers. Swimming pools and temporary pools of water are excluded.

“Open space, park, woods, farm, or ranch” include cemeteries, golf courses, woods, forest preserves, vacant lots, undeveloped land, airport land, ball fields, and school fields.

**Down payment.** See the definition “Major source of down payment.”

**Educational attainment.** Data on educational attainment are derived from a question that asks, “What is the highest level of school ... completed or the highest degree ... has received?” The question on educational attainment applied only to progress in “regular” schools. Regular schools include public, private, and parochial elementary and high schools (both junior and senior), colleges, universities, professional, vocational, trade, and business schools. Schooling in other than regular schools is counted only if the credits obtained are regarded as transferable in the regular school system.

The category “high school graduate” included people who received either a high school diploma or the equivalent; for example, passed the Test of General Educational Development [GED] and did not attend college. The category “Associate degree” includes people whose highest degree is an associate degree in (1) an occupational program that prepares them for a specific occupation, and the course work may or may not be creditable toward a bachelor’s degree or (2) an academic program primarily in the arts and sciences, and the course work is transferable to a bachelor’s degree. Some examples of professional degrees include medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and law.

In the books, to obtain the total number of householders who are high school graduates, add 1) high school graduates (includes equivalency), 2) graduates with some college, no degree, 3) with an associate degree, 4) with a

bachelor’s degree, and 5) with a graduate degree. To obtain the total number of householder graduates with a bachelor’s degree, add (1) with a bachelor’s degree and (2) with a graduate or professional degree. The microdata have similar information on other household members aged 14 years and older.

See also the definition “Neighborhood conditions and neighborhood services.”

### **Elderly.**

**Books.** Data for elderly include all households with householders aged 65 years and older. Note that this definition is narrower than in Department of Housing and Urban Development housing programs, which count as elderly all households where the householder or spouse is 62 or older, or has a disability.

**Microdata.** Not applicable; data can be classified at any age.

**Electric fuses and circuit breakers.** These statistics are presented for occupied housing units. The data show whether an electric fuse has blown or circuit breaker has tripped in the home in the 3 months prior to the interview, or while the household was living in the unit if less than 3 months. A blown fuse or tripped breaker switch results in the temporary loss of electricity until the fuse is replaced or the breaker switch reset. Blown fuses inside major pieces of installed equipment (such as some air conditioners) are counted as blown fuses or tripped breaker switches. The item may identify inadequate wiring, but it also happens commonly when people move into houses and are unfamiliar with which items can be turned on at the same time.

**Electricity.** See the definition “Monthly costs for electricity and gas.”

**Elevator on floor.** Statistics are shown for housing units in structures with two or more floors that have one or more passenger elevators in working condition on the same floor as the sample unit. Elevators used only for freight are excluded.

**Equipment.** This item refers to selected equipment that is not shared with other households. Refrigerators, burners, ovens and disposals are counted only if they are in working order or the household plans to have them repaired or replaced soon.

**Complete kitchen facilities.** A housing unit has complete kitchen facilities when it has all of the following: (1) kitchen sink; (2) burners, cook stove, or microwave oven; and (3) refrigerator. These terms are further defined below.

The same criteria are used for occupied and vacant units in determining complete kitchen facilities. In some areas of the country it is common for the occupant to bring a refrigerator. In these cases the vacant unit, lacking a refrigerator, has an incomplete kitchen.

*Kitchen sink.* Only a sink in the unit or on an enclosed porch is counted, but it does not matter whether it is in the kitchen. However a bathroom sink does not count as a kitchen sink.

*Refrigerator.* It may or may not have a freezer. Kerosene refrigerators are counted, but not ice boxes.

*Microwave oven.* Data for microwave ovens were collected only if the respondent did not report having a cooking stove with oven, or burners. Prior to 1997, the data collected included all types of ovens except toaster ovens.

*Burners.* Data for burners were collected only if the respondent did not report having a cooking stove with oven. Burners built into a stove or counter top are counted, as are burners in a wood-burning stove.

*Cooking stove.* The cookstove can be mechanical or wood-burning.

*Dishwasher.* Counter top dishwashers are not counted.

*Washing machine.* Any kind with a motor is counted.

*Clothes dryer.* Only clothes dryers with motors are counted, not hand-operated wringers or hand-turned spin dryers.

*Disposal in sink.* A disposal is a motorized device that grinds waste so it can flow through the waste water pipe.

*Trash compactor.* Only built-in motorized trash compactors are counted.

*Air conditioning.* Air conditioning is defined as the cooling of air by a refrigeration unit; excluded are evaporative coolers, fans, or blowers that are not connected to a refrigeration unit. A room air-conditioning unit is an individual air conditioner that is installed in a window or an outside wall and generally intended to cool one room, although it may sometimes be used to cool several rooms. A central system is a central installation that air conditions the entire housing unit or major portions of it. In an apartment building, a central system may cool all apartments in the building; each apartment may have its own central system; or there may be several systems, each providing central air conditioning for a group of apartments. A central installation with individual room controls is a central air-conditioning system.

**External building conditions.** The external condition of the building that contains the sample unit was determined by direct questions asked of the respondent. The categories were grouped into the following: roof, walls, windows, and foundation.

*Roof.* A “sagging roof” is a critical defect indicating continuous neglect, or deep or serious damage to the structure. Only roofs with substantial sagging were included. “Missing roofing material” includes rotted, broken, loose or missing shingles, tiles, slate, shake, and tin, caused by

extensive damage from fire, storm, or serious neglect. “Hole in roof” occurs when the missing roof materials expose the interior of the unit directly to weather. Holes caused by construction activity were not counted unless the construction had been abandoned.

*Walls.* “Missing bricks, siding, other outside wall material” applies to the exterior wall (including chimney) of the structure. Those defects may have been caused by storm, fire, flood, extensive neglect, vandalism, and so forth. Materials may include clapboard siding, shingles, boards, brick, concrete, and stucco. The missing materials do not necessarily expose the interior of the unit directly to weather. Missing materials resulting from construction activity were not counted unless construction had been abandoned. “Sloping outside walls” is a critical defect indicating continuous neglect or serious damage to the structure. Only walls with substantial sagging were included.

*Windows.* “Boarded-up windows” have been sealed off to protect against weather or entry and include windows and/or doors covered by board, brick, metal, or some other material. “Broken windows” indicate several broken or missing window panes. “Bars on windows” are to protect against unlawful entry. The condition of the windows has no bearing on this item. The bars can be vertical, horizontal, or a metal grating. Windows completely covered with metal sheeting are not included in this category.

*Foundation crumbling or has open crack or hole.* This category includes large cracks, holes, and rotted, loose, or missing foundation material.

**Extra unit.** Extra units include units classified as usual residence elsewhere (URE), vacant units designated as occasional use, and seasonal units (excluding migratory). A series of four questions was asked concerning these units.

*Reasons for extra unit owned.* The following designations for the reason the unit was owned:

- Previous usual residence—never sold the unit after moving from the unit into a new permanent residence
- Recreational purposes—used for vacations, weekends, sports, and holidays, but is not anyone’s usual residence currently
- Investment purposes—kept currently for investment purposes regardless of why it was obtained originally
- Wishes to sell the property but has not been able to yet—the owner is currently attempting to sell the unit but has not been successful yet
- Inherited—received as an inheritance in the settling of an estate
- Some other reason—used if none of the other designations applied

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*Location of extra unit.* Designates how close the unit is to the owner's current residence.

*Nights owner spent at extra unit.* Indicates how often the extra unit was used by the owner.

*Nights owner rented extra unit.* Determines how often the extra unit was used by people other than the owner.

**Family or primary individual.** While any occupant of a housing unit is called a household member, each household includes either (a) a *family*, which is the householder and all (one or more) other people living in the same household who are related to the householder by blood, marriage, or adoption, or (b) a *primary individual*, which is a householder who lives alone or with nonrelatives only. In any case the household also may include one or more roommates, lodgers, servants, or other people unrelated to the householder. These are considered members of the household but not of the family.

Married couples related to the householder of a family are included in the family and are not considered as separate families unless they reside in separate living quarters. While they are part of the *family*, they are also usually a *subfamily* (see the definition "Persons other than spouse or children").

By definition, families include the householder and at least one relative, so in the statistics on household composition, families are always included in the various categories of two-or-more-person households. Primary individuals with nonrelatives living with them also are tabulated as two-or-more-person households. Primary individuals living alone are tabulated as one-person households.

The definition of families and primary individuals is significant in that some income items are collected only for the family or primary individual; these are: source of income, current income, food stamps, savings and investments. (Source of income and amount of wages are, in fact, only for family members 16 years and older.) For other household members 16 years and older, who are not related to the householder, total income is collected for each person, but sources and current changes in income are not identified, and their income is not included in comparisons with monthly housing costs or value. The distinction is meant to approximate whose income may be available for housing and other shared living expenses. However it is imperfect in the case of roommates who share more or less equally. See also the definition "Household composition."

**Farm.** See the definition "Crop sales."

**First-time owners.** If neither the owner or any co-owner have ever owned or co-owned another home as a usual residence then the housing unit was reported as the first home ever owned. Previous homes purchased solely as vacation homes or homes purchased for commercial rental

purposes are not considered usual residences. However, if a previously owned home was originally purchased as a usual residence and later used as a vacation home or for commercial or rental purposes, the owner is not a first-time owner.

**Flush toilet and flush toilet breakdowns.** A privy or chemical toilet is not considered a flush toilet. Flush toilets outside the unit were not counted. The statistics on breakdowns of flush toilet are shown for housing units with at least one flush toilet for the household's use only. The flush toilet may be completely unusable because of a faulty flushing mechanism, broken pipes, stopped up sewer pipe, lack of water supplied to the flush toilet, or some other reason. For households with more than one toilet, the question asked about times when *all* toilets were unusable.

**Food stamps.** These data are restricted to families and primary individuals with total incomes of \$25,000 per year or less. Housing units are counted in these data if the householder or any relative currently living in the unit received food stamps in the past year, even at another address. Food stamps are government issued coupons that can be used to purchase food. The food stamp program is a joint federal-state program that is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, state and local governments.

**Foundation.** This item is restricted to one-unit buildings and excludes mobile homes. A structure has a basement if there is an enclosed space at least partially underground in which a person can walk upright under all or part of the building. The basement is under all the building if it is under the entire main structure, excluding garages, carports, and porches. Crawl space is space between the ground and the first floor of the house, but it is not high enough for a person to walk upright. A house is built on a concrete slab if it is built on concrete that has been poured on the ground. The "other" category refers to a house built on stilts or pilings (for example, beach houses), boats, and motor homes.

**Fuels.** Electricity may be supplied by above- or underground electric power lines or generated at the housing unit. Piped gas is gas piped through underground pipes from a central system to serve the neighborhood. Bottled gas is pressurized gas stored in tanks or bottles that are filled or exchanged when empty. Fuel oil is heating oil normally supplied by truck to a storage tank for use by the heating system. Kerosene or other liquid fuel includes kerosene, gasoline, alcohol, and other similar combustible liquids. Coal or coke is usually delivered by truck. Wood refers to the use of wood or wood charcoal as a fuel. Solar energy refers to the use of energy available from sunlight as a heating fuel source. Other includes briquettes made of pitch and sawdust, coal dust, waste material like corn-cobs, purchased steam, or any other fuel not listed.

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**Fuels, other house heating.** These are the same types of fuels mentioned above but use in addition and/or supplementing the main house heating fuel.

**Gas.** See the definition “Monthly costs paid for electricity and gas.”

**Government subsidy for repairs.** Government subsidy for repairs is an assistance program provided by the federal, state, or local government for the purpose of obtaining or installing energy conservation products for low income households. The money must be spent that way. The type of products include insulation, storm doors, storm windows, weather stripping, caulking, furnace tune-ups, or for repairing broken doors and windows.

**Ground anchors.** See the definition “Manufactured housing/mobile home tiedowns.”

**Group quarters.** See the definition “Housing units.”

**Halls.** See the definition “Light fixtures in public halls.”

### **Heating and cooling degree days.**

*National books and microdata.* Each degree that the average temperature for a day is below 65 degrees Fahrenheit produces one *heating degree day* (HDD). For example, if the maximum temperature is 70 degrees F and the minimum temperature is 52 degrees F, the average temperature for the day is 61 degrees, resulting in four heating degree days. A day when the average temperature is 65 or more has zero heating degree days.

Each degree that the average temperature for a day is above 65 degrees Fahrenheit produces one *cooling degree day* (CDD). For example, if the maximum temperature is 80 degrees F and the minimum temperature is 62 degrees F, the average temperature for the day is 71 degrees, resulting in six cooling degree days. A day when the average temperature is 65 or less has zero cooling degree days.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) provided the information on degree days, based on averages for 1951-80. Each sample unit was assigned heating and cooling degree days using average NOAA data for counties.

*Metropolitan books and microdata.* Not applicable.

**Heating equipment.** Data are shown for the main heating equipment and other heating equipment used in addition to the main heating equipment. More than one category of “Other heating equipment” could be reported for the same household. Only one type of equipment was reported as the “Main heating equipment.”

*Warm-air furnace* refers to a central system that provides warm air through ducts leading to various rooms.

*Steam or hot water system* refers to a central heating system in which heat from steam or hot water is delivered through radiators or other outlets. It also includes solar heated hot water that is circulated throughout the home.

*Electric heat pump* refers to a heating and cooling system that utilizes indoor and outdoor coils, a compressor, and a refrigerant to pump in heat during the winter and pump out heat during the summer. Only heat pumps that are centrally installed with ducts to the rooms are included in this category. Others are included in wall units.

*Built-in electric units* refer to units permanently installed in floors, walls, ceilings, or baseboards.

*Floor, wall, or other built-in hot-air unit without ducts* delivers warm air to the room right above the furnace or to the room(s) on one or both sides of the wall in which the furnace is installed.

*Room heater with flue* refers to nonportable room heaters in the wall or free standing heaters that burn liquid fuel, and which are connected to a flue, vent, or chimney to remove smoke and fumes.

*Room heater without flue* refers to any room heater that burns kerosene, gas, or oil, and that does not connect to flue, vent, or chimney.

*Portable electric heater* refers to heaters that receive current from an electrical wall outlet.

*Fireplaces with inserts* have a fan-forced air circulation system to force the heat into the room.

*Fireplaces without inserts* refers to glass door fire screens or fire backs inserted in the back of the fireplace to passively reflect heat.

*Cooking stove* refers to gas or electric ranges or stoves originally manufactured to cook food.

*Stove* refers to any range or stove that burns solid fuel including wood burning, pot belly, and Franklin stoves.

*Other* includes any heating equipment that does not fit the definition for any of the previous definitions.

**Heating equipment breakdowns.** Statistics are shown for housing units occupied by the householder during the winter prior to the interview and refer only to the main heating equipment. The data are classified by whether the housing unit was uncomfortably cold for 24 hours or more, the number of times equipment breakdowns occurred lasting 6 hours or more, and causes for the breakdowns.

The heating equipment is broken down if it is not providing heat at its normal heating capacity through some fault in the equipment. *Utility interruptions* occur when there is a cutoff in the gas, electricity, or other fuel supplying the heat. *Inadequate heating capacity* refers to heating equipment that is providing heat at its normal capacity, but the

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housing unit is still too cold for the occupants. *Inadequate insulation* refers to air drafts through window frames, electrical outlets, or walls that are cold. *Cost of heating* refers to the occupants turning down their thermostat or turning the equipment off altogether to save money. This category includes utilities/fuels that are unavailable due to unpaid bills.

**Hispanic.** “Hispanic” refers to the origin of the householder, and was determined by asking respondents to identify people living in the unit who were Hispanic or Spanish American. There is no intent to include people of Brazilian or Portuguese ancestry. Hispanic people may be of any race. Most identify themselves as White or Black, as shown in Table 2-1.

Data on Hispanic households shown in the AHS are collected in the 50 states and the District of Columbia and therefore do not include households living in Puerto Rico.

**Home equity line-of-credit.** This is a revolving home-equity loan that allows the property owner to borrow against the equity up to a fixed limit set by the lender, without reapplying for a loan.

**Home-equity lump-sum loan.** This is a home equity loan that is paid out in a one-time lump-sum amount and that must be repaid over a set period of time.

**Home-equity mortgage.** See the definition “Mortgages currently on property.”

**Homes currently for sale or rent.** The data are presented in the book for owner-occupied units, year-round units temporarily occupied by people who have a usual residence elsewhere, and vacant units. The classification of the unit refers to the current action of the owner. The owner may offer the unit *up for rent only*, *up for rent or for sale*, or *for sale only*. In addition, the current owner may have contracted to rent or sell the unit but the transfer has not yet taken place. Finally, the housing unit may be *not on the market* at all.

**Household.** A household consists of all people who occupy a particular housing unit as their usual residence, or who live there at the time of the interview and have no usual residence elsewhere. The usual residence is the place where the person lives and sleeps most of the time. This place is not necessarily the same as a legal residence, voting residence, or domicile.

Households include not only occupants related to the householder but also any lodgers, roomers, boarders, partners, wards, foster children, and resident employees who share the living quarters of the householder. It includes people temporarily away for reasons such as visiting, traveling in connection with their jobs, attending school, in general hospitals, and in other temporary locations.

By definition, the count of households is the same as the count of occupied housing units.

**Householder.** The householder is the first household member listed on the questionnaire who is an owner or renter of the sample unit and is aged 18 years or older. An owner is a person whose name is on the deed, mortgage, or contract to purchase. A renter is a person whose name is on the lease; if there is no lease, a renter is a person responsible for paying the rent. If no one meets the full criteria, the age requirement is relaxed before the owner/renter requirement. Where the respondent is one of several unrelated people who all could meet the criteria, the interviewer may list the respondent first, so the respondent will be the householder and can answer the questions that are asked specifically about the householder, such as data on moves and income sources.

### **Household composition.**

*Books.* The following categories are published in the books.

*Married-couple families.* Each household in this group includes the householder and spouse, and other people, if any, who are related to the householder and live in the household. If the householder’s spouse is *not* present, but another married couple is present, for example daughter and son-in-law or mother- and father-in-law, the household is *not* counted here as a *married-couple family*.

*Other male householder.* This category includes households with male householders who are widowed, divorced, separated or single, or who are married with wife absent for other reasons.

*Other female householder.* This category includes households with female householders who are widowed, divorced, separated or single, or who are married with husband absent for other reasons.

*No nonrelatives.* When this phrase modifies *Married-couple households*, then households that include householder, spouse, nonrelatives, and other relatives, if any, are included with *Other male* and *Other female householder*, rather than with *Married-couples*, *no nonrelatives*. The data are published both ways, in the data tables, so readers can see whether their findings are affected by the presence of nonrelatives with married couples.

*Single children under 18 years old.* This category includes all household members under 18 years, whether related to the householder or not, who are not currently married (that is they have never been married, or are divorced, separated, or widowed). For example, it includes currently unmarried children of lodgers and foster children.

*Own never-married children.* This category includes any household member under 18 years old, if he or she has never been married, and is a son, daughter, stepchild, or adopted child of the householder. By definition, children of

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subfamilies are not children of the householder, so they are excluded from this count of own children. The data are published for both this definition of children and the definition above (based on age and current marital status), in different stub items, so readers can see whether the definition of children affects their findings.

*Microdata.* Not applicable; researchers may calculate these and other categories from the data on each person.

See also the definitions “Persons other than spouse or children” and “Family or primary individual.”

### **Household moves and formation.**

*Books.* Data are shown for households that moved into the present unit during the 12 months prior to the date of the interview. The distribution is further classified by (1) whether the household moved together from the same unit, from two or more units, or moved at separate times, and (2) if previous householder(s) moved into the present unit.

The total does not measure net household formation, since it omits deaths, moves to institutions, and moves abroad, and it does not show whether all occupants of the previous unit moved here; some may have stayed there, or moved elsewhere.

The categories do indicate people moving out of units where they were not the householder (divorce or children setting out on their own.), and people moving in with others (marriage, roommates, children moving from one parent to another, or to a grandparent).

*Microdata.* Not applicable; researchers may calculate these and other categories from the data on each person.

**Housing units.** A *housing unit* is a house, apartment, group of rooms, or single room occupied or intended for occupancy as *separate living quarters*.

*Living quarters* is a general term that includes both *housing units* and *group quarters*. Living quarters include structures intended for residential use (such as a house, apartment building, boarding house, or mobile home). Living quarters also include the following, but only if they are occupied as usual residences: (a) places such as tents, caves, boats, and railroad cars; and (b) structures intended for nonresidential use (such as rooms in a warehouse where a guard lives). Living quarters exclude quarters being used entirely for nonresidential purposes, such as a store, an office, or quarters used for storing business supplies, machinery, or agricultural products.

*Separate living quarters* are those in which the occupants *live and eat separately* from any other people in the structure and that have *direct access* from the outside of the structure or through a common hall, lobby, or vestibule that is used or intended for use by the occupants of more than one unit or by the general public. This means that

the hall, lobby, or vestibule is not part of any unit but must be clearly separate from all units in the structure. For vacant units, the criteria of *separateness* and *direct access* are applied to the intended occupants whenever possible. If the information cannot be obtained, the criteria are applied to the previous occupants.

*Group quarters.* The following types of living quarters are not classified as housing units and are not covered by the AHS interviews (some are in the microdata as Noninterviews):

*Institutional group quarters* are living quarters occupied by one or more people under care or custody, such as children in an orphanage, people in a nursing home, and prisoners in a penitentiary.

*Noninstitutional group quarters* do not involve care or custody, and do not have *separate* living. They include college dormitories, fraternity and sorority houses, nurses’ dormitories, and congregate housing for the elderly. In addition, noninstitutional group quarters include any living quarters that are occupied by nine or more people unrelated to the householder.

Note that institutional and commercial establishments that have single-family houses or individual apartments with direct access, where staff live and eat separately, such as some residential hotels, and units for college professors, are *housing units*. Military housing for singles is not covered, but housing where civilian family members live is, if it meets the definition of a housing unit.

*Hotels.* Occupied rooms or suites of rooms in hotels, motels, and similar places are classified as housing units only when occupied by permanent residents; that is, people who consider the hotel as their usual residence or have no usual residence elsewhere. Vacant rooms or suites of rooms are classified as housing units only in those hotels, motels, and similar places in which 75 percent or more of the accommodations are occupied by permanent residents.

*Rooming houses.* If any of the occupants in a rooming or boarding house live and eat separately from everyone else in the building and have direct access, their quarters are classified as separate housing units. The remaining quarters are combined. If the combined quarters contain eight or fewer roomers unrelated to the householder, or a person in charge, they are counted as *one housing unit*. Otherwise they are *noninstitutional group quarters*.

*New housing units.* Units being built are classified as housing units (though they may be vacant), if construction has reached a point where all exterior windows and doors are installed and final usable floors are in place. Note this stage of construction is earlier than the one used in *Duration of vacancy* (see the definition “Vacancy, seasonality”), which measures when construction was completed.

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The occupants of each housing unit may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated people who share living arrangements (up to the limit of eight people unrelated to the householder).

Both occupied and vacant units are counted, except that the following are excluded if they are vacant: (a) tents, caves, boats, railroad cars, and the like; (b) structures intended for nonresidential use; (c) units used for business storage (storage of personal furniture does not disqualify a unit); and (d) units unfit for human habitation (roof, walls, windows, or doors no longer protect the interior from weather, or there is positive evidence such as a sign on the house or block that the unit is to be demolished or is condemned).

**How the housing unit was acquired.** The householder obtained the housing unit by one of several options: by buying the house already built; by signing a sales agreement that included the land as well as the cost of building the house; by having a contractor build it on the householder's land; by the householder building it on the householder's own land (this includes a person acting as own contractor, this also includes leased land); or by receiving it as a gift or inheritance.

**Income.** The survey covers total money income in the 12 months before the interview. It covers people age 16 and older (age 14 and older before 1999) currently living in the housing unit, even if they lived elsewhere during some of the previous 12 months. The figures represent the amount of income before any deductions such as taxes, Social Security, union dues, bonds, and insurance.

The figures exclude: capital gains; lump sum payments from inheritances or insurance; occasional gifts; other sporadic payments; money borrowed; tax refunds; withdrawal of bank deposits; accrued interest on uncashed savings bonds; payments between household members except wages in a family business; income "in kind" such as free living quarters, housing subsidies, food stamps, or food produced and consumed in the home; and money from the sale of property (unless the recipient was in the business of selling such property). Figures also exclude income of people who have died or moved out of the housing unit, even if they lived in it for part of the previous 12 months.

Most data are from the respondent's replies. For people not related to the householder, the interviewer tries to ask them directly about their income, but if they are not available, the interviewer asks the respondent. Medians for income are rounded to the nearest hundred dollars.

Figures are shown separately for household income and income of families and primary individuals (see the definition "Family and primary individuals"). Each has its own

advantages. Only household income includes the income of lodgers, roommates, employees, and other household members who are not related to the householder.

*Wages and salaries* include income received for work performed as an employee. It includes wages, salary, piece-rate payments, commissions, tips, cash bonuses, and Armed Forces pay, but not pay that a business owner pays to herself or himself.

*Business, farm, or ranch* income is received from self-employment in a business, professional practice, partnership, or farm.

*Social Security and pensions* include pensions, survivors' benefits, and disability payments. This is not intended to include Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which is grouped with welfare, but many respondents confuse SSI and Social Security. Both come from the Social Security Administration. They used to be issued on different colored checks to minimize confusion, but now most payments are sent by electronic deposit.

*Interest* is money received or credited to a person's account for the use of money. Notes, bonds, deposits in banks, credit unions, savings and loan associations, money market accounts, and certificates of deposit (CDs) are the most common sources of interest.

*Stock dividends* are payments made by a corporation to its stockholders. These include periodic payments from an estate or trust fund, and dividends paid or credited to those who hold shares in a mutual fund.

*Rental income* includes the total money received from rental of property, rental from real estate, or from roomers or boarders, less all rental expenses.

*SSI, Public assistance, or welfare* includes the Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI), which is administered by the Social Security Administration, and replaces most public assistance payments that were previously made by state and local welfare agencies to low income aged, blind, and disabled persons. Public assistance or welfare includes money received from local or state administered public assistance programs such as old-age assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), aid to the blind or totally disabled, or other public assistance.

*Alimony or child support* includes alimony, money received periodically from a former spouse after a divorce or legal separation. Child support is money received for the support of children not living with their father/mother as the result of a legal separation.

*Other* includes worker's compensation or other disability payments, unemployment compensation, veteran's payments, total amount that parents receive for the care of foster children in their home, money received from gambling, scholarship and fellowship money received by students for which no service or work was required, military reenlistment bonuses, and any other sources of money income not specified above.

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There may be significant differences in the income data between the AHS and other surveys and censuses. For example, the time period for income data in the AHS is the 12 months prior to the interview, while other income data generally refer to the calendar year prior to the date of the interview. Additional differences in the income data may be attributed to how income questions are asked, levels of missing data (usually high on questions about income), whether missing data are estimated or ignored, sampling variability, and nonsampling errors.

See also the definition “Current income” in Appendix A, the topics “Poverty” in Appendix C, and “Effect on income” in Appendix D.

**Inside (P)MSAs.** See the definition “Metropolitan areas.”

**Insurance.** See the definition “Property insurance.”

**Interest.** See the definition “Current interest rate.”

**Items included in primary mortgage payment.** The respondent was asked to indicate which items were included in the monthly mortgage payment besides principal and interest. These items included property taxes, property insurance, private mortgage insurance, and other charges. Other charges may include disability insurance or life insurance.

**Journey to work.** National books and microdata. The books publish data on householders. The microdata have similar information on all workers.

*Workers.* Include all people aged 14 years and older who held a job in the United States, any time the week before the interview.

*Householders.* Householders who worked last week include householders who reported having a job in the United States, any time the week before the interview.

*Principal means of transportation to work last week.* This refers to the principal mode of travel used to get from home to work. People who use different means of transportation on different days of the week were asked to specify the one used most often. People who use more than one means of transportation to get to work each day were asked to specify the one used for the longest distance during the trip to work. Public transportation refers to bus, streetcar, subway, or elevated trains. Other means include taxicabs, ferryboats, surface trains, van service. See also the definition “Neighborhood conditions and neighborhood services.”

*Travel time from home to work.* The total elapsed time in minutes reported to usually get from home to work during the week prior to interview was counted as the travel time to work. The elapsed time included time spent waiting for public transportation and picking up members of car-pools. Respondents were instructed to report travel time to the nearest minute.

*No fixed place to work.* Workers with no fixed place of work were those who did not usually work at the same location each day and did not usually report in to a central location to begin work each day.

*Distance from home to work.* This was the usual one-way, “door-to-door” distance in miles from home to work during the week prior to interview. Respondents were instructed to report travel rounded to the nearest mile.

*Departure time to work.* Refers to the time (hour and minutes) the respondent left for work. The categories begin with midnight, 12:00 a.m., and progress to 11:59 p.m. Metropolitan books and microdata. Not applicable.

**Kitchen.** See the definition “Equipment.”

**Land contract.** A land contract is an arrangement for the sale of real estate whereby the buyer may use, occupy, and enjoy land but no deed is given by the seller (and no title passes) until all of the sale price has been paid.

**Last used as a permanent residence.** See the definition “Vacancy, seasonality.”

**Lenders of primary and secondary mortgage.** This item is presented for units with two or more mortgages. The data are classified by whether the money was borrowed from a firm (bank or other organization), the seller of the property, or from another individual. Other organizations consist of mortgage corporations, pension plans, credit unions, and savings and loan associations. *Other individual(s)* includes anyone who was not the most recent owner.

**Light fixtures in public halls.** These statistics are presented for housing units in two-or-more-unit structures. Data include whether or not there are light fixtures in the public halls and whether or not some, none, or all of the light fixtures are in working order. Light fixtures include wall lights, ceiling lights, or table lamps in the public halls of the building. Public halls are used by the occupants and guests to get to their apartment doors.

**Line of credit.** See the definition “Home equity line-of-credit.”

**Line-of-credit amount used for home additions, improvements, or repairs.** This is the percentage of the dollar amount of home equity loans used for home additions, improvements, or repairs.

**Line-of-credit monthly payment.** This is the amount of monthly payment on the line-of-credit paid to the bank at the present interest rate.

**Living quarters.** See the definition “Housing units.”

**Location of previous unit.** Books show data for units in which the householder moved during the 12 months prior to the interview. Microdata show similar information for moves since the previous interview, or for the past 2 years for units added to the sample.

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The data compare metropolitan areas of the previous residence and the residence in the AHS sample, where the interview was conducted. The AHS residence is coded by its 1983 metropolitan area definition (see the definition “Metropolitan areas”), which may not be the current area definition. Since 1993, coding the previous residence with comparable 1983 boundaries has not been done because of geographic boundary changes. Therefore, this item has been suppressed to avoid spurious changes.

**Lodgers.** See the definitions “Household,” “Persons other than spouse or children,” and “Rent paid by lodgers.”

**Lot size.** Lot size includes all connecting land that is owned or rented with the home. Excluded are two-or-more-unit buildings and two-or-more-unit mobile homes. In the books, median lot size is shown to hundredths of an acre.

**Lower cost state and local mortgages.** Data are shown for owner-occupied units with one or more mortgages. These are loans generally 1 percent to 3 percent below the current mortgage interest rate at the time the loan was made. The loans are managed through state or local governments. Excluded are federally funded programs of the Veterans Administration and Farmers Home Administration.

**Lump-sum loan.** See the definition “Home-equity lump-sum loan.”

**Major source of down payment.** This item refers to the source of the cash used for down payment or outright purchase of the property (house or lot). If more than one source applied, the one providing the largest amount was recorded. Sale of previous home was reported only if the previous home was sold during the 12-months preceding the acquisition of the present home. Savings, or cash on hand, includes money drawn as bank deposits, credit unions, share accounts, saving bonds, certificates of deposits (CDs), money market funds, and IRA or KEOGH accounts. Sale of other investment includes the sale of other real property or real estate other than the previous home or from the sale of other investments such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds, dissolved business ventures. Borrowing other than a mortgage on this property was reported if the present owner borrowed the down payment, even if the property was mortgaged.

Money received as a gift regardless of the source was categorized *inheritance or gift*. *Land where building built used for financing* means the land on which the structure was built was used as the present owner’s equity in the property. Sources of down payment that do not fit any of the above categories were recorded in the *other* category.

**Manager.** See the definition “Owner or manager on property.”

**Manufactured/mobile homes.** A manufactured/mobile home is defined as a housing unit that was originally constructed to be towed on its own chassis. It also may have permanent rooms attached at its present site, or other structural modifications. The term does not include pre-fabricated buildings, modular homes, travel campers, boats, or self-propelled vehicles like motor homes. Some people use the terms trailer or manufactured housing in the same sense as mobile homes.

**Manufactured/mobile home setup.** Manufactured/mobile homes are placed on a permanent masonry foundation; resting on concrete pads; or up on blocks, but not on concrete pads.

**Manufactured/mobile home tiedowns.** Manufactured/mobile home or trailer tiedowns are ground anchor foundation systems that give stability to manufactured housing/mobile homes.

**Manufactured/mobile homes in group.** Manufactured/mobile homes or mobile home sites gathered close together are considered to be in a “group.” This may be a mobile home park or it may be a number grouped together on adjacent individually owned lots but not in a mobile home park. See also the definition “Site placement.”

#### **Medians.**

*Books.* We estimate each median from the printed distribution. For example if there are 12 million homes of a particular type, the median is the 6 millionth, or halfway point of these homes. Therefore, if 5 million homes are below \$400 rent, then the median is the millionth home above \$400. Finally, if the next interval printed in the book (from \$400 to \$449), has 3 million homes, the median is assumed to be one-third of the way through the interval (at \$417).

This technique overestimates medians by a few percent, because most homes cluster at the bottom of their intervals. The clustering happens because landlords ask for rent in round numbers, like \$400, and people give answers in round numbers, like \$20,000 income, or 40 years old.

We do not show the median at all if the distribution is estimated to have fewer than 25 sample cases (50,000 homes in the national books).

*Microdata.* Not applicable; no medians are shown in the public use file.

#### **Median monthly housing costs for owners.**

*Books.* In addition to the median for “Monthly housing costs,” this item gives two additional medians for *owner-occupied* units. The first median includes maintenance costs in addition to those items included in “Monthly housing costs.” The second median excludes second and

subsequent mortgages, installment loans or contracts, and maintenance costs, but includes all remaining items listed in “Monthly housing costs.” Because neither of these medians includes costs for renter-occupied units, they are not comparable to the median presented in “Monthly housing costs,” except in the “Owners column” and the “Owners” chapter.

*Microdata.* Not applicable.

**Metropolitan areas.** Metropolitan areas are made up of whole counties (towns in New England) that have significant levels of commuting and contiguous urban areas in common. They may cross state lines, and usually include large amounts of rural land and farm land, provided the county or town as a whole qualifies. See also the definitions “Central cities,” “Places,” and “Urban,” which is based on much higher population density than metropolitan areas.

*National books and microdata.* Since 1985 the National AHS has used the official list of metropolitan areas published on June 27, 1983, by the Office of Management and Budget as OMB Bulletin 83-20. That list was developed from definitions published January 3, 1980, in the *Federal Register*, Volume 45, pages 956-963. AHS still uses these 1983 boundaries for data in the 2001 national microdata file to measure change consistently over time. However, AHS uses the 1990 census-based geography for the data in the 2001 national publication.

*National microdata* identify parts of many metropolitan areas. The sample size is usually too small for analysis, but researchers may group the areas, for example, by growth rate, turnover rate, and size, to have enough cases in each group to analyze. For six broad areas, containing a total of 18 metropolitan area codes (shown in *Codebook for the American Housing Survey*, Volume 2 or 3), the sample sizes have been augmented to permit analysis: Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Northern New Jersey, and Philadelphia. Elsewhere, metropolitan area codes are shown for (a) central cities of a metropolitan area where they had total 1980 population of 100,000 or more, and (b) urbanized suburbs of a metropolitan area where they had total 1980 population of 100,000 or more. In some areas, only central cities or only suburbs met the cutoff, so only those sample cases show metropolitan codes. Other sample cases show 9999 as their metropolitan code. This suppression for confidentiality does not affect the printed books.

*Metropolitan books and microdata.* Since 1995 the metropolitan AHS has used HUD definitions of metropolitan areas. These are based on the definitions of the Office of Management and Budget, but some outlying areas are omitted from the HUD definitions. Those counties have enough commuting to meet the OMB definition, but HUD believes they are not part of the same housing market as

the rest of the area and need to be omitted for housing analysis. The areas for a given year included in and excluded from each metropolitan area are listed in the front of the books for that year.

### **Monthly costs paid for electricity and piped gas.**

Three separate procedures are used to estimate monthly costs of electricity and gas. All respondents are asked if they have records available showing their costs for electricity (or gas) separate from other utilities. If they respond “yes,” they are asked the amount of their electric (or gas) bill for the most recent months of January, April, August, and December. These months are the best predictors of annual costs. On average, more than one-third of respondents provide answers for at least 1 of the 4 months.

If the respondent provides data for only 1 month, the first procedure is used. The data for the month are adjusted using regression formulas to estimate yearly costs that are then divided by 12. These formulas are modeled after the results of the Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECS) sponsored by the United States Department of Energy. These formulas take into account the following characteristics of the unit: electric water heating, natural gas water heating, year built, type of unit, number of rooms, number of bathrooms, number of appliances, and number of household members.

If the respondent provides data for 2, 3, or 4 months, the second procedure is used. As with the first procedure, the monthly data are adjusted using regression formulas, modeled after the results of RECS, to estimate yearly costs that are then divided by 12. Because more than 1 month’s worth of real costs are available, it is not necessary to take into account detailed characteristics of the unit as is done in procedure one.

If the respondent answers “no,” that he or she does not have separate records for the electricity (or gas), the third procedure is used. The respondent is asked to provide an estimate of the average monthly costs. A factor is then applied that, in effect, lowers these costs to make them consistent with electricity and gas costs in RECS.

A full explanation of the formulas is in Appendix E of *Codebook for the American Housing Survey*, Volume 3.

### **Monthly expenses, additional help with.**

*Books.* Not applicable.

*Microdata.* Additional questions are asked of renters when the ratio of monthly housing costs as percent of current income is high. Rental households receiving housing assistance that report spending more than 35 percent of their income on housing; or rental households not receiving housing assistance with incomes less than \$15,000 that report spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing were asked questions on assistance for food,

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clothing, car payments, tolls, public transportation, child care, medical care or medicine, and utility bills. They were asked to specify the type of help they received.

**Monthly housing costs.** The data are presented for owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units as well as vacant-for-rent units.

Monthly housing costs for *owner-occupied* units include the sum of monthly payments for all mortgages or installment loans or contracts, except reverse annuity mortgages and home equity lines of credit. Costs also include real estate taxes (including taxes on manufactured/mobile homes, and manufactured/mobile home sites if the site is owned), property insurance, homeowner association fees, cooperative or condominium fees, mobile home park fees, land rent, utilities. Costs do not include maintenance and repairs, but see the definition “Median monthly housing costs for owners.”

Monthly housing costs for *renter occupied* housing units include the contract rent, utilities, property insurance, mobile home park fee. Renter housing units occupied without payment of cash rent are shown separately as no cash rent. For rental units subsidized by a housing authority, the federal government, or state or local governments, the monthly rental costs reflect only the portion paid by the household and not the portion subsidized. The figures do not adjust for lost security deposits, or the benefit of free rent offered by some owners.

Monthly housing costs for *vacant-for-rent* housing units include rent asked, but not utilities or other charges. The category, *Depends on income of the occupants*, means the rent charged will vary depending on the occupants income, such as in public housing or some military housing.

The term utilities here includes electricity, gas, fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, or wood.), water, sewage disposal, garbage and trash collection, but not telephones or cable television. Utility costs are counted if they are paid by the occupant or by someone else, such as a relative, welfare agency, or friend. They may be paid separately or included in rent, condominium fee, or mobile home park fee, and the AHS questions take care to avoid double-counting.

*Specified owners and renters*—In the books, Table 19 of each chapter presents financial characteristics for these groups, which are comparable to the costs published before 1984. Medians for monthly housing costs are rounded to the nearest dollar.

### **Monthly housing costs as percent of current income.**

*Books.* The yearly housing costs (monthly housing costs multiplied by 12) are expressed as a percentage of the total Current income (see the definition “Current income”). The percentage was computed separately for each unit

and rounded to the nearest percent, so *25 to 29 percent* means 24.5 to 29.49 percent. The percentage was not computed for units where occupants reported no income, a net loss, or no cash rent. The category *100 percent or more* counts units with housing costs exceeding income. This situation may mean inaccurate income or housing costs data, or true but temporary situations. For most purposes, readers may wish to treat this line as missing or unreliable data.

*Microdata.* Not applicable; may be calculated as needed.

**Monthly payment for principal and interest.** The data present the monthly dollar amount paid on the mortgage for principal and interest only. They do not include that portion of the monthly payment used for property taxes, homeowner insurance, and/or other charges. In the books, medians for monthly payment for principal and for interest are rounded to the nearest dollar.

**Mortgage origination.** Data are shown for owner-occupied units with one or more mortgages. For units that *placed new mortgages*, data are classified by the date the new mortgage was obtained in relation to the date the property was acquired. An *assumed* mortgage indicates that the current owner assumed the previous owner's when the property was acquired and has not been refinanced. A *wrap-around* mortgage is a mortgage with a face value that encompasses the unpaid balance of the first mortgage(s), plus the amount of any new funds extended by the wrap-around lender. *Combination of the above* means that there was more than one method of origination for the outstanding mortgages on the property.

### **Mortgages currently on property.**

*Books.* The owner or the owner's spouse was asked the number of mortgages or similar loans (including home equity loans) currently in effect on the home. Data are shown for the number of units with the following mortgage categories: owned free and clear, reverse mortgages, regular and home equity.

A *mortgage or similar debt* refers to all forms of debt for which the property is pledged as security for payment of the debt. It includes such debt instruments as deeds of trust, trust deeds, mortgage bonds, home-equity lines of credit, home-equity lump-sum loans, and vendors' liens. In trust arrangements usually a third party, known as the trustee, holds the title to the property until the debt is paid. In home-equity lines of credit, home-equity lump-sum loans, and vendors' lien arrangements, the title is kept by the buyer but the seller (vendor) reserves, in the deed to the buyer, a lien on the property to secure payment of the balance of the purchase price. Also included as a *mortgage or similar debt* are contracts to purchase, land contracts, and lease-purchase agreements where the title to the property remains with the seller until the agreed upon payments have been made by the buyer.

See also the definitions “Current interest rate,” “Items included in primary mortgage payment,” “Lenders of primary and secondary mortgage,” “Lower cost state and local mortgages,” “Major source of downpayment,” “Monthly payment for principal and interest,” “Primary mortgage,” “Remaining years mortgaged,” “Term of primary mortgage at origination or assumption,” “Total outstanding principal amount,” “Type of primary mortgage,” “Year primary mortgage originated,” “Reason primary mortgage refinanced,” “Cash received in primary mortgage refinance,” “Percent of primary mortgage refinanced cash used for home additions, improvements, or repairs,” “Percent of nonrefinanced primary mortgage, including home equity lump sum, used for home purchase and improvement,” “Total home equity line-of-credit limit,” “Total outstanding line-of-credit loans,” “Current line-of-credit interest rate,” “Line-of-credit amount used for home additions, improvements, or repairs,” and “Line-of-credit monthly payment.”

*Microdata.* Not applicable. May be recoded as needed.

**Moves.** See the definitions “Choice of present home and home search,” “Household moves and formation,” “Location of previous unit,” “Persons—previous residence,” “Present and previous units,” “Reasons for leaving previous unit,” “Recent movers comparison to previous home,” “Structure type of previous residence,” “Tenure of previous unit,” and “Year householder moved into unit.”

**Neighborhood conditions and neighborhood services.** The statistics are based on the respondent’s opinion. He or she may define the neighborhood as any size. Some topics are collected by an open-ended question on what, if anything, bothers the respondent about the neighborhood. Others come from questions about specific topics. The first three, and schools, have followup questions about whether the problem bothers the respondent so much he or she would like to move.

*Street noise or heavy street traffic.* Street noise refers to noise made by children playing outdoors, noise from a factory or business, or any other sounds that the respondent considers to be street noise. Traffic refers to the amount of vehicular traffic that the respondent considers “heavy.”

*Neighborhood crime.* This category refers to all forms of street and neighborhood crime, such as petty theft, assaults against the person, burglary, or any related activities that the respondent judges to be a crime.

*Odors.* This category refers to smoke, gas, or bad smells.

Those three specific questions are followed by an open-ended question about what (else) bothers the respondent. The category “People” includes such complaints as unfriendly neighbors, noisy children, other races, or specific neighbors.

*Public transportation.* The respondent answers (1) if service is available; (2) if service is satisfactory; and (3) if any member of the household uses the service at least once a week.

*Shopping.* The respondent answers whether grocery stores or drug stores were satisfactory and were within 1 mile of the housing unit.

*Police protection.* The respondent was asked if police protection was satisfactory.

*Elementary schools.* The respondent was asked (1) if young children in the household attended public school, private school, preschool, or were schooled at home (does not attend school before 1999); (2) if the public elementary school was satisfactory; (3) if it was so unsatisfactory the respondent wants to move; and (4) if the public elementary school was within 1 mile of the housing unit. See also the definition “Educational attainment.”

See also the definitions “Bars on windows of buildings,” “Conditions of streets,” “Description of area within 300 feet,” “Educational attainment,” “Other buildings vandalized or within interior exposed,” “Overall opinion of neighborhood,” and “Trash, litter, or junk on streets or any properties.”

#### **Noninterview.**

*Books.* Not applicable.

*Microdata.* Noninterview cases are classified as Type A, Type B, or Type C.

Type A noninterviews are units occupied by people eligible for interview who were not interviewed. A noninterview means that valuable information was lost and the sample returns may not be representative of the population. It is very important to keep noninterviews to a minimum. Type A noninterview categories include (1) no one home; (2) temporarily absent; (3) refused; (4) unable to locate; (5) language problems; and (6) other occupied - specify.

Type B noninterviews are units not eligible for interview at present, but who could become eligible for interviews in the future. Type B noninterview categories include (1) permit granted, construction not started; (2) under construction, not ready; (3) permanent or temporary business or commercial storage; (4) unoccupied site for mobile home or tent; (5) other unit or converted to institutional unit; (6) occupancy prohibited; (7) interior exposed to the elements; (8) Type B, not classified.

Type C noninterviews are units ineligible for sample, either because they no longer exist or because of sample reasons. Type C noninterview categories include: (1) demolished or disaster loss; (2) house or mobile home moved; (3) unit eliminated in structural conversion; (4) merged, not in current sample; (5) permit abandoned; (6) Type C not classified elsewhere; and (7) unit eliminated in subsampling.

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**Number of regular mortgages and home equity mortgages.** See the definition “Mortgages currently on property.”

**Number of single children under 18 years old.** See the definition “Household composition.”

**Occupied housing units.** A housing unit is classified as occupied if there is at least one person who lives in the unit as a usual resident at the time of the interview, or if the occupants are only temporarily absent, for example, on vacation. However, if the unit is occupied entirely by people with a usual residence elsewhere, the unit is classified as vacant. By definition, the count of occupied housing units is the same as the count of households.

**Other activities on property.** Data presented exclude rental units. Property consists of one or more tracts of land that the respondent considers to be the same property, farm, ranch, estate. The tracts may be adjoining or they may be separated by a road, creek, or other piece of land. For a condominium, this item refers to the sample unit only.

A medical or dental office is a doctor’s or dentist’s office regularly visited by patients.

A commercial establishment may be located in the same building as the sample unit, or it may be located elsewhere on the property (such as grocery store, restaurant, gasoline station, and veterinary office). Those housing units that have no recognizable alterations to the outside of the house are not considered as having a commercial establishment. A farm is not classified as a commercial establishment.

**Other buildings vandalized or with interior exposed.** The respondent was asked if there were any vandalized or abandoned buildings within 300 feet of the sample unit. A unit is counted as vandalized if it has most of the visible windows broken, doors pulled off, has been badly burned, has words or symbols printed on it, has portions of the roof missing, or in some other way has the interior exposed to weather.

**Other housing costs per month.** A homeowners’ association fee (excludes condominium and cooperative fees) is a fee charged for services such as upkeep of common property (painting hallways, cleaning lobbies, mowing lawns, repairing laundry facilities, paving parking areas, and repairing street lights). The fee may include the use and maintenance of either indoor or outdoor swimming facilities or other recreational facilities (party rooms, tennis courts, basketball courts, exercise rooms, and playground areas). Also the homeowner’s association fee can include payments for security personnel such as security guards or services such as telephone answering service, maid service, or other domestic help.

Mobile home park fees are regular payments to the park management that could include site rental, utility charges, mail handling, and/or fees for the maintenance of common areas.

Aside from mobile homes (where site rent is covered above in mobile home park fees), in a few areas of the country, occupants may own the unit, but not the land on which it stands. Land rent refers to land that is rented or leased from the land owner, and “ground rent” is paid. These leases are for long periods of time (50-100 years) when originated. The lease obligation transfers with the property and cannot be canceled.

The medians for other housing costs are rounded to the nearest dollar.

**Outside (P)MSAs.** See the definition “Metropolitan areas.”

**Overall opinion of neighborhood.** The data presented are based on the respondent’s overall opinion of the neighborhood. The respondent defines neighborhood. The respondent was asked to rate the neighborhood based on a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is the best and 1 is the worst.

**Overall opinion of structure.** The data presented are based on the respondent’s overall opinion of the house or apartment as a place to live. The respondent was asked to rate the structure based on a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is the best and 1 is the worst.

**Owner or manager on property.** These statistics show the number of rental housing units in structures of two or more units with the owner or resident manager living on the property.

**Own never-married children under 18 years old.** See the definition “Household composition.”

**Parallel heating equipment.** This is additional heating equipment for an area not heated by the main heating equipment.

**Payment plans of primary and secondary mortgages.** Data are presented separately for primary and secondary mortgages. The term “payment” refers to regular principal and interest payments only, and not to payments for real estate taxes and property insurance. *Fixed payment, self amortizing* mortgages have payments that do not change during the term of the loan, with the principal payments sufficient to pay off the loan completely within the stated term. *Adjustable rate mortgages* are mortgages whose interest rates could be changed during the life of the mortgage, changing the amount of the payments required. In *adjustable term mortgages* the amount of the payments stays constant, but the number of payments required to pay off the loan can change over time as interest rates change. *Graduated payment mortgages* allow

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monthly payments to change during the term of the mortgage by means other than a change in interest rate. These mortgages begin with lower payments that rise later in the life of the mortgage. *Balloon mortgages* are mortgages in which only part or none of the principal is paid off during the term of the loan (which commonly is about 5 years). At the end of the term, the principal is paid off in one lump sum, refinanced with a new loan, or extended by renewal of the loan.

**Percent of nonrefinanced primary mortgage, including home equity lump sum, used for home purchase and improvement.** This question is asked of homeowners who have a primary mortgage that is not a refinance of a previous mortgage. These homeowners were asked what percentage of this loan was used for the purchase of the home or additions, improvements, or repairs to the home.

**Percent of primary mortgage refinanced cash used for home additions, improvements, or repairs.** This question is asked of homeowners who reported “to receive cash” as a reason for the refinance of their mortgage. These homeowners were asked what percentage was used for additions, improvements, or repairs to the home.

*National books and microdata.* Not applicable.

**Persons.** See the definition “Household.”

#### **Persons other than spouse or children.**

*Books.* Data are shown for households with the following types of people:

*Other relatives of householder.* This category counts households that include any person related to the householder by blood, marriage, or adoption, except spouse, son, daughter, stepchild, or adopted child under 18 years old (regardless of marital status).

*Single adult offspring 18 to 29.* This category counts households with at least one member aged 18-29, if he or she is not currently married (that is, they have never been married or are divorced, separated or widowed), and is a son, daughter, stepchild, or adopted child of the householder. Note this category has the same marital status categories as “Single children under 18 years old,” but the same relationship to householder categories as “Own never-married children.” These are defined under “Household Composition.”

*Single adult offspring 30 years of age or over.* This category counts households with at least one member aged 30 or older, if he or she is not currently married (that is, they have never been married or are divorced, separated or widowed), and is a son, daughter, stepchild, or adopted child of the householder.

*Households with three generations.* For each person whose parent lives in the household, the parent (biological, adoptive, or stepparent) is identified in the questionnaire. Each person who is a child or grandchild of the householder is also identified. These codes keep count of households where the following live in the unit:

1. one or more sons, daughters, stepchildren or adopted children of the householder or spouse (regardless of marital status or age), and one or more parents of the householder or spouse, or
2. one or more parents of the householder or spouse, and one or more parents of these parents, or
3. one or more sons, daughters, stepchildren or adopted children of the householder or spouse (regardless of marital status or age), and one or more of these children’s children (grandchildren of the householder or spouse, regardless of marital status or age).

Note that the definition of children is different from those in “Single children under 18 years old,” and “Own never-married children.” The first does not involve relationship to householder, and neither involve marital status and age. Also note that if a household has more than three generations, it is still counted here. In addition to the three generations, there also may be other relatives in the household.

*Subfamily.* A subfamily is one of the following groups that do not include the householder or spouse, but are related to the householder and live in the household (1) a married couple (with or without children of any type), or (2) one parent with one or more of his or her own never-married children under 18 years old. A common example of a subfamily is a young married couple sharing the home of the husband’s or wife’s parents.

*Subfamily householder.* For subfamilies that include a couple, the husband is defined as the subfamily householder; for other subfamilies the parent is the householder.

*Households with other types of relatives.* This category counts households with relatives of the householder, other than the spouse, children, three generations, or subfamilies already counted. Therefore, it includes relatives such as uncles, nieces, cousins, or grandchildren present without their parents. A household already counted above may be counted again, as long as it has some additional relatives not counted above.

*Nonrelatives.* A nonrelative of the householder is any person in the household who is not related to the householder by blood, marriage, or adoption. Roomers, boarders, lodgers, partners, resident employees, wards and foster children are included in this category.

*Co-owners or co-renters.* This category includes households for which the names of two or more unrelated household members are on the deed of ownership, mortgage, land contract, contract to purchase, or similar document, or lease; or, if there is no lease, two or more unrelated household members are responsible for paying the rent.

*Lodgers.* This category is restricted to members of the household who pay rent to another household member and are age 16 and older, nonrelatives of the householder, not sons, daughters, stepchildren, or adopted children of a co-owner or co-renter, and not a co-owner or co-renter themselves. This item does not use the “lodger” answer on relationship to the householder since it is less carefully defined than the question on lodgers’ rent. See also the definitions “Household” and “Rent paid by lodgers.”

*Unrelated children under 18 years old.* This category counts households with members under 18 years old who are unrelated to the householder and are not co-owners, co-renters, or lodgers, regardless of marital status. Thus it includes foster children and children of lodgers and employees as long as they are under 18.

*Other nonrelatives.* This category counts households with nonrelatives of the householder who are not in the categories above, so they are not co-owners, co-renters, lodgers, or under 18. For example, it includes employees and housemates who do not pay a regular rent as lodgers. It also may include households with nonrelatives counted in the categories below.

*One or more secondary families.* A secondary family is a group of two or more people who are related to each other by birth (Parent/child, child less than 18 years old), marriage, or adoption, but who are not related to the householder. The unrelated secondary family may include people such as guests, roomers, boarders, or resident employees and their relatives living in a household.

*Two- to eight-person households, none related to each other.* None of the household members is related to any other household member. They may be co-owners, co-renters, lodgers, partners, employees, or foster children. The books make no distinction between housemates and unmarried partners, because we do not want the interviewers to probe into private relationships.

*Microdata.* Not applicable; may be calculated from household relationships.

See also the definition “Household composition.”

### **Persons per room.**

*Books.* Persons per room is computed for each occupied housing unit by dividing the number of people in the unit by the number of rooms in the unit. The figures shown refer, therefore, to the number of housing units having the specified ratio of people per room.

*Microdata.* Not applicable; may be calculated from household size and rooms.

**Persons per bedroom** Persons per bedroom is computed for each occupied housing unit by dividing the number of people in the unit by the number of bedrooms in the unit. The figures shown refer, therefore, to the number of housing units having the specified ratio of people per bedroom.

*Microdata.* Not applicable; may be calculated from household size and rooms.

**Persons—previous residence.** All people are counted who lived at the previous residence at the time of the move, as well as those who usually lived there but were temporarily away. Persons who were staying there at the time of move, but who had a usual residence elsewhere, were not counted.

**Physical problems—severe.** A unit has *severe* physical problems if it has any of the following five problems:

*Plumbing.* Lacking hot or cold piped water or a flush toilet, or lacking both bathtub and shower, all inside the structure (and for the exclusive use of the unit, unless there are two or more full bathrooms).

*Heating.* Having been uncomfortably cold last winter for 24 hours or more because the heating equipment broke down, and it broke down at least three times last winter for at least 6 hours each time.

*Electric.* Having no electricity, or all of the following three electric problems: exposed wiring, a room with no working wall outlet, and three blown fuses or tripped circuit breakers in the last 90 days.

*Hallways.* Having all of the following four problems in public areas: no working light fixtures, loose or missing steps, loose or missing railings, and no working elevator.

*Upkeep.* Having any five of the following six maintenance problems: (1) water leaks from the outside, such as from the roof, basement, windows, or doors; (2) leaks from inside structure such as pipes or plumbing fixtures; (3) holes in the floors; (4) holes or open cracks in the walls or ceilings; (5) more than 8 inches by 11 inches of peeling paint or broken plaster; or (6) signs of rats in the last 90 days.

**Physical problems—moderate.** A unit has *moderate* physical problems if it has any of the following five problems, but none of the severe problems:

*Plumbing.* On at least three occasions during the last 3 months, all the flush toilets were broken down at the same time for 6 hours or more (see the definition “Flush toilet and flush toilet breakdowns”).

*Heating.* Having unvented gas, oil, or kerosene heaters as the primary heating equipment.

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*Kitchen.* Lacking a kitchen sink, refrigerator, or cooking equipment (stove, burners, or microwave oven) inside the structure for the exclusive use of the unit.

*Hallways.* Having any three of the four problems listed under “Physical problems—severe” under Hallways.

*Upkeep.* Having any three or four of the six problems listed under “Physical problems—severe” under Upkeep.

See also the definitions “Bars on windows of buildings,” “Common stairways,” “Equipment,” “External building conditions,” “Flush toilet and flush toilet breakdowns,” “Heating equipment and heating equipment breakdowns,” “Overall opinion of structure,” “Primary source of water and water supply stoppage,” “Water leakage during last 12 months,” “Selected deficiencies.”

### **Place size.**

*National books.* The geographic variable place size, as shown in national reports, shows the current count of housing units in places as defined in the 1990 census.

*Microdata and metropolitan books.* Not applicable.

See also the definition “Central cities” and “Urban and rural residence.”

**Plumbing facilities.** The category “With all plumbing facilities” consists of housing units that have hot and cold piped water as well as a flush toilet and a bathtub or shower. For units with less than two full bathrooms, the facilities are only counted if they are for the exclusive use of the occupants of the unit. Plumbing facilities need not be in the same room. Lacking some plumbing facilities or having no plumbing facilities for exclusive use means that the housing unit does not have all three specified plumbing facilities (hot and cold piped water, flush toilet, and bathtub or shower) inside the housing unit, or that the toilet or bathing facilities are also for the use of the occupants of other housing units.

See also the definitions “Complete bathrooms,” “Flush toilet and flush toilet breakdowns,” and “Sewage disposal and sewage disposal breakdowns.”

### **Population in housing units.**

*Books.* Included are all people living in housing units. Persons living in group quarters are excluded.

*Microdata.* Not applicable; can be calculated by adding weight times household size, for all occupied units.

**Poverty status.** The poverty data differ from official poverty estimates in two important respects:

(1) Interest in housing affordability made it appropriate for AHS to adopt a poverty definition based on household income. The official method is based on the income of families, and of individuals living without relatives. (Under the official approach, the poverty status of two unrelated individuals living together would be determined by comparing the income of each individual to the one-person poverty threshold. The result might be that both were in poverty, both were out of poverty, or one was in poverty and one was not. In the AHS books, their poverty status was determined by comparing their combined income to the two-person poverty threshold.) The effect of using household income is to count about 6 percent fewer people in poverty than the official estimate. See the “Technical Paper X, *Effect of Using a Poverty Definition Based On Household Income*,” U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1976.

(2) The official poverty estimates are based on the March supplement to the Current Population Survey. Income questions in that survey are very detailed, and measure income received during the previous calendar year. Income questions in the AHS are much less detailed, and measure income received during the 12 months just before the interview. Because interviews were conducted over several months, the AHS income measures do not pertain to a fixed period.

The poverty thresholds are based on the Department of Agriculture’s 1961 Economy Food Plan and reflect different consumption requirements by number of adults and children. They consider only money income (see the definition “Income”), not assets or benefits in kind, such as housing subsidies. The poverty thresholds are updated every year to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The official thresholds are below in Table C.

Table C. **Poverty Thresholds**

Total persons	HUD average limits (L50) Oct. 1999 to Sept. 2000	HHS guidelines Mar. 2000 to Mar. 2001	Poverty thresholds, January 2001 to December 2001												
			Weighted average	Number of children under 18 years											
				None	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 or more			
1 person . . . . .	18,375	8,590	8,794												
Householder 65 years and over . . .	18,375	8,590	8,259	8,259											
Householder under 65 years . . . . .	18,375	8,590	8,959	8,959											
2 persons . . . . .	21,000	11,610	11,239												
Householder 65 years and over . . .	21,000	11,610	10,419	10,409	11,824										
Householder under 65 years . . . . .	21,000	11,610	11,590	11,531	11,869										
3 persons . . . . .	23,625	14,630	13,738	13,470	13,861	13,874									
4 persons . . . . .	26,250	17,650	17,603	17,761	18,052	17,463	17,524								
5 persons . . . . .	28,350	20,670	20,819	21,419	21,731	21,065	20,550	20,236							
6 persons . . . . .	30,450	23,690	23,528	24,636	24,734	24,224	23,736	23,009	22,579						
7 persons . . . . .	32,550	26,710	26,754	28,347	28,524	27,914	27,489	26,696	25,772	24,758					
8 persons . . . . .	34,650	29,730	29,701	31,704	31,984	31,408	30,904	30,188	29,279	28,334	28,093				
9 persons or more <sup>1</sup> . .	36,750	32,750	35,060	38,138	38,322	37,813	37,385	36,682	35,716	34,841	34,625	33,291			

<sup>1</sup>HUD and HHS limits continue rising with higher household sizes, at the same rate shown.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey.

Note that in the official poverty thresholds, elderly are expected to need less than nonelderly in the one- to two-person groups. Also note that an all-adult household is expected to need less than the same size household where one member is a child, but if additional members are children, costs go down again.

These official poverty thresholds are different from the poverty guidelines published for program purposes by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on February 16, 2001, *Federal Register*, Volume 66, number 33, page 10,695 to 10,697. (Guidelines are 15 percent higher in Hawaii, and 25 percent higher in Alaska than shown below.)

The HUD “very low income limits” (the L50 series) for four-person *households* are 50 percent of median family income for families in each metropolitan area or nonmetropolitan county. The HUD income limits vary among areas, and the average national HUD income limits in 1997 are shown (local details are at [www.huduser.org/data/factors.html](http://www.huduser.org/data/factors.html)).

The HUD adjustments for household size in the L50 series are very roughly based on national average differences in housing cost. The HUD limits have smaller adjustments than the official and HHS poverty thresholds, which are based on food cost. Housing cost does not vary as much as food does between small and large households. Academic research suggests even the HUD adjustments may be too large; see van Praag, “The Relativity of the Welfare Concept,” in Nussbaum and Sen, *Quality of Life*, Oxford University Press, 1993, page 374, which suggests 6 percent adjustments per person instead of HUD’s 10 percent and 8 percent adjustments.

*Microdata.* Not applicable; may be calculated by comparing current or past income to the thresholds.

**Present and previous units.** The present unit is the one occupied by the householder or respondent at the time of the interview. The previous unit is the one from which the householder or respondent moved. If the householder or respondent moved more than once during the 12 months prior to the date of the interview, the previous unit is the one from which they last moved.

**Previous home owned or rented by someone who moved here.**

*Books.* These data are shown for units where the householder moved within the United States during the past year.

*Microdata.* Data are shown for units where anyone in the present household moved within the United States during the past year.

**Previous occupancy.** The statistics presented are restricted to housing units built in 1990 or later. “Previously occupied” indicates that some person or people not now in the household occupied the housing unit prior to the householder or other related household members’ occupancy. “Not previously occupied” indicates that either the householder or some other current household member was the first occupant of the housing unit.

**Primary metropolitan statistical areas.** See the definition “Metropolitan areas.”

**Primary mortgage.** Detailed information on regular and lump-sum home-equity mortgages was collected in the AHS on the first three mortgages reported, even if the unit

had four or more mortgages. If the owner(s) had both a regular and a lump-sum home-equity mortgage, priority was given to the regular mortgage(s) for collecting detailed information. On the basis of this information, one of the mortgages was considered to be primary. The definition of the primary mortgage may not agree with legal definitions of a “first mortgage,” which would be paid first after a foreclosure.

If there is only one mortgage, it is primary. If two or more mortgages exist, the following hierarchy was used: (1) regular mortgage (as opposed to a lump-sum home-equity loan), (2) Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Veterans Administration (VA), or Rural Housing Service/Rural Development (RHS/RD) mortgage; (3) assumed mortgage; (4) mortgage obtained first; (5) largest initial amount borrowed.

**Primary source of water and water supply stoppage.** A *public system or private company* refers to any source supplying running water to six or more housing units. The water may be supplied by a city, county, water district, or private water company, or it may be obtained from a well that supplies six or more housing units. An *individual well* that provides water for five or fewer housing units is further classified by whether it is *drilled or dug*. Water sources such as springs, cisterns, streams, lakes, or commercial bottled water are included in the *other* category.

Water supply stoppage means that the housing unit was completely without running water from its regular source. Completely without running water means that the water system servicing the unit supplied no water at all; that is, no equipment or facility using running water (in kitchen and bathroom sinks, shower, in bathtub, flush toilet, dishwasher, and other similar items) had water supplied to it, or all were inoperable. The reason could vary from a stoppage because of a flood or storm, to a broken pipe, to a shutdown of the water system, to a failure to pay the bill, or other reasons.

Data on water supply stoppage are shown if they occurred in the 3 months prior to the interview, or while the household was living in the unit if less than 3 months, and if the breakdown or failure lasted 6 consecutive hours or more. Housing units with water supply stoppage also are classified according to the number of times the stoppages occurred.

**Principal.** Principal is the amount of money raised by a mortgage or other loan, as distinct from the interest paid for its use. It is the amount of debt excluding interest. See the definition “Total outstanding principal amount.”

**Private mortgage insurance.** Private mortgage insurance is insurance that a lender (such as PMI or GMAC) generally requires a home buyer to obtain if the down payment made by the home buyer is below a certain percentage (often 20 percent down payment for conventional loans).

**Problems.** See the definitions “Neighborhood conditions and neighborhood services,” “Physical problems,” and “Poverty status.”

**Property insurance.** This item refers to insurance on the structure and/or its contents (such as furniture, appliances, or clothing) and usually contains some liability insurance. Renters usually do not have property insurance, but its cost is counted if they do have it. The total cost is the most recent yearly cost for which the occupants have actually been billed. Yearly cost was divided by 12 before calculating a monthly median cost. Medians for property insurance are rounded to the nearest dollar.

**Public elementary school.** See the definitions “Educational attainment” and “Neighborhood conditions and neighborhood services.”

**Purchase price.** The purchase price refers to the price of the house or apartment and lot at the time the property was purchased. Closing costs are excluded from the purchase price, and for mobile homes, the value of the land is excluded. In the books, the median purchase price is rounded to the nearest dollar.

**Quality.** See the definitions “Neighborhood conditions and neighborhood services,” “Physical problems,” “Selected amenities,” and “Selected deficiencies.”

**Questionnaire.** Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) was introduced in 1997, eliminating paper questionnaires. See the topic “Computer assisted interviewing” in Appendix C. A copy of the questions used in the laptop can be obtained in Volume 3 of the *Codebook for the American Housing Survey*. For copies, call HUD User at 800-245-2691 or the American Housing Survey at 301-763-3235.

**Race.** In the books, the classification of “race” refers to the race of the householder occupying the housing unit. The concept of race as used by the Census Bureau does not denote a clear-cut scientific definition of biological stock. Race was determined on the basis of a question that asked for self-identification of a person’s race. For respondents who refused to answer, the interviewer decided on a race only for people she or he saw; others are imputed by computer. For mixed-race answers, respondents are asked for the race most closely identified with, respondents are asked for the mother’s race, or the first race mentioned is used, in that order of priority.

Hispanic is considered an ethnic origin rather than a race and is tallied separately. Most Hispanics report themselves as White, but some report themselves as Blacks or other categories. Figures are given for race and ethnicity in Table 2-1.

Revisions to the OMB Statistical Policy Directive 15 designate five races (White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or

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other Pacific Islander) and two ethnic origins (Hispanic or Latino and not Hispanic or Latino). The AHS will adopt the new terminology in 2003.

**Ratio of loan to value.** See the definition “Current total loan as percent of value.”

**Ratio of value to current income.**

*Books.* The ratio of value to current income was computed by dividing the value of the housing unit by the total current (family) income (see the definition “Current income”). The ratio was computed separately for each housing unit and was rounded to the nearest tenth. For value and current income, the dollar amounts were used. Units occupied by individuals who reported no income or a net loss compose the category “zero or negative income.” Medians for the ratio of value to current income are rounded to the nearest tenth.

*Microdata.* Not applicable; can be calculated from value and income.

**Real estate taxes.** This item includes special assessments, school taxes, county taxes, and any other real estate taxes. Excluded are payments on delinquent taxes due from prior years. Rebates are subtracted from the total. When the real estate taxes are included with the mortgage, a separate amount for the taxes is obtained. To determine average monthly cost, yearly cost was divided by 12. In the books, medians for real estate taxes are rounded to the nearest dollar.

**Reason primary mortgaged refinanced.** If the current primary mortgage was a regular mortgage (not a lump-sum home-equity loan) and was not an assumed or wrap-around mortgage, the respondent was asked if it was a refinancing of a previous mortgage and the reason for the refinancing.

**Reasons for leaving previous unit.** These data are shown for units where the respondent moved during the 12 months before the interview. The distribution may not add to the total, because the respondent was not limited to one reason.

*Private displacement* includes situations in which a private company or person wanted to use the housing unit for some other purpose (to develop the land or building commercially, to occupy the unit, to convert the unit to a condominium or cooperative, or to make repairs and renovate the unit).

*Government displacement* means the respondent was forced to leave by the government (local, state, or federal), because it wanted to use the land for other purposes (to build a road or highway, for urban renewal or other public activity, because the building was condemned, or some other reason).

*Disaster loss* includes damage by a tornado, storm, flood, earthquake, fire, landslide or other similar occurrences.

*New job or job transfer* indicates that the respondent moved to begin a new job or was transferred from the previous location to the present location.

*To be closer to work/school/other* means that the respondent moved because commuting was too far and respondent wanted to live closer to work, school, or some other commuting purpose.

*Other, financial/employment related* refers to financial or employment related reasons, such as wanting to look for a new or different job, because the person entered or left the U.S. Armed Forces, retired, or some other financial/employment reason.

*To establish own household* means that the respondent left a previous residence (parent’s home, rooming or boarding house, or shared apartment) to establish own household.

*Needed larger house or apartment* refers to moves that were necessary because of crowding or for aesthetic reasons.

*Married, widowed, divorced, or separated* is marked if the respondent moved because of marital reasons.

*Other, family/personal related* indicates that the respondent moved because of family or personal reasons such as wanting to live closer to relatives.

*Wanted better home* was marked if the respondent moved because the previous residence was too old, run-down, in need of too many repairs or if there was nothing wrong with the previous home, but the respondent simply wanted to move to a better one.

*Change from owner to renter, or change from renter to owner* indicates a change in tenure.

*Wanted lower rent or less expensive maintenance* indicates that the respondent moved because the rent (or mortgage) payments were too high at the previous residence or that the taxes or upkeep were too high.

*Other housing related reasons* includes such reasons as respondent wanted larger yard, different zoning, or wanted a better investment.

*Other* includes examples such as respondent wanted a change in climate, neighborhood crime problem, racial or ethnic composition of neighborhood.

See also the definitions “Choice of present home and home search” and “Choice of present neighborhood and neighborhood search.”

**Recent movers.** Data for recent movers are shown for two categories of movers: (1) units where the householder moved into the present unit during the 12 months prior to the interview (shown as a column in most tables, and in

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Table 10 of each chapter) and (2) units where the respondent moved into the present housing unit during the 12 months prior to the interview (Table 11 of each chapter). In most cases, the two groups represent the same households.

Microdata also show moves of other household members.

**Recent movers comparison to previous home.** This item is based on the respondent's comparison between the present unit and previous unit as to which was better.

**Recent movers comparison to previous neighborhood.** This item is based on the respondent's comparison between the present neighborhood and the previous neighborhood as to which was better. The definition of neighborhood is whatever the respondent considers it to be.

**Regions.** States contained in each region are as follows:

*Northeast.* Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

*Midwest.* Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

*South.* Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.

*West.* Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, California, and Hawaii.

**Remaining years mortgaged.** The owner or owner's spouse was asked the length of time it would take to pay off the loan at the current payments. The response reflects the amortization schedule. For example, in many balloon mortgages the initial monthly payments are calculated to pay off the loan in 30 years, though the mortgage is due in 5 years, and the 60th payment is very large. Such a mortgage would count here as 30 years, not 5 years, minus whatever number of years have passed. In the books, medians for remaining years mortgaged are rounded to the nearest year.

**Rent paid by lodgers.** This item refers to regular, fixed rent: a set amount of money, billed or charged, which is paid at regular intervals by a lodger (usually weekly or monthly) to a member of the household. This category is restricted to lodgers who are 16 years and older, nonrelatives of the householder, and people who are not spouses of a co-owner or co-renter, not children of a co-owner or co-renter, and not a co-owner or co-renter themselves. Medians for rent paid by lodgers are rounded to the nearest dollar.

**Rent reductions.** *Rent control* means that increases in rent are limited by state or local law. The jurisdiction, state or local agency, mandates that rent increases may not exceed some level, or must be approved by the government. This category does not include limits that HUD puts on all rental projects insured by the Federal Housing Administration.

A housing unit is classified as being in a *public housing* project if the unit is owned by any local or state government agency, and operated as public housing. These organizations may receive subsidies from the federal or state government, but the local agency owns the property.

A housing unit is classified as having a subsidy if the household pays a lower rent because a federal, state, or local government program pays part of the cost of construction, mortgage, or operating expenses. These programs include rental assistance programs where part of the rent for low-income families is paid by HUD, and direct loan programs of HUD and the Department of Agriculture for reduced cost housing. Units requiring income verification are usually subsidized. Many households in these programs apply through the public housing authority, and misreport themselves in public housing. Others do not think of their units as subsidized, and misreport themselves as unsubsidized.

Subsidies for homeowners, including HUD subsidies for cooperatives, are not counted, since the questions are asked only of renters.

**Renter maintenance quality.** Renters were asked their opinion of owner's response time and if owners were polite and considerate for maintenance and repairs of major and minor problems. The definition of a major or minor problem was left up to the discretion of the respondent. Satisfaction was measured by the following choices: "usually," "not usually," "very mixed," "haven't needed any," and "landlord not responsible for maintenance." When problems occurred, renters were asked if problems were solved quickly once repairs started.

**Replacements and additions.**

*Books.* Not available.

*Microdata.* The statistics refer to within 2 years prior to the interview and are restricted to owner-occupied units. The respondents were first asked if, in the last 2 years has there been a major disaster, such as an earthquake, tornado, hurricane, landslide, fire, or flood that required them to make extensive repairs to their home. Only if the damage involved at least 2 rooms or a majority of the home were replacements and additions counted as disaster required repairs.

Respondents were asked to name major repairs made within the last 2 years. Also, they were asked if the repair was a replacement or an addition, if someone in the household did the work, and the cost of the repair.

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The microdata file shows the total number of replacements/additions reported by all households, and the total cost of these replacements/additions. Each household could name as many as 74 jobs done in their home.

Questions were asked about where the work was done, if any rooms were created or attached, and if the bathroom or kitchen had been remodeled within the last 2 years.

Respondents also were asked if they added or replaced their roof, siding, interior water pipes; electrical wiring, fuse boxes or breaker switches; doors or windows; plumbing fixtures such as sinks or bath tubs; insulation; wall to wall carpeting, flooring; paneling or ceiling tiles; air conditioning; built in heating equipment; septic tank; water heater; dishwasher, garbage disposal; driveways or walkways; fencing or walls; patio, terrace or detached deck; swimming pool, tennis court and other recreational structures; shed, detached garage or other buildings.

The microdata file also includes information about whether the household got a low interest loan or grant to pay for repairs and the amount spent in a typical year on routine repairs and maintenance.

**Reverse annuity mortgages.** These were defined to the respondent as “reverse annuity mortgage or home equity conversion mortgage.” These mortgages involve borrowing against home equity for retirement or income and sometimes do not need to be repaid until after the owner’s death.

**Rooms.** The respondent was asked to report all rooms in the housing unit. The interviewer then coded the responses into different categories. Rooms counted include whole rooms used for living purposes, such as bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, recreation rooms, permanently enclosed porches that are suitable for year-round use, lodgers’ rooms, and other finished rooms. Also included are rooms used for offices by a person living in the unit.

A dining room, to be counted, must be a separate room. It must be separated from adjoining rooms by built-in archways or walls that extend at least 6 inches from an intersecting wall. Half walls or bookcases count if built-in. Movable or collapsible partitions or partitions consisting solely of shelves or cabinets are not considered built-in walls.

Bathrooms, laundry rooms, utility rooms, pantries, and unfinished rooms are not counted as rooms.

**Rooms used for business.** A room used for business or office space is a room set up for use as an office or business such as rooms for: a business owner, contract worker, self-employed person, commercial use (such as daycare or catering) or regular job.

The question asked if rooms were exclusively used for business space. Followup questions asked if there is direct access to the outside without going through any other room and whether the space is used both as business space and for personal use. See also the definition “Other activities on property.”

**Routine maintenance in last year.** Routine maintenance consists of regular maintenance activities necessary for the preventive care of the structure, property and fixed equipment items. Included are such things as painting, papering, floor sanding, restoring of some shingles, fixing water pipes, replacing parts of large equipment, such as furnace, repairing fences, gutters, sidewalks, decks or patios, removing dangerous trees, termite inspection. Housecleaning is not included. Routine maintenance does not include work reported under the section on repairs, improvements, and alterations. Medians for routine maintenance are rounded to the nearest dollar.

**Rural.** See the definition “Urban and rural residence.”

**Safety of primary source of water.** Water was considered safe (consumable or potable) if the main water source was used or could be used for drinking. The respondent was not asked what source was used by the household for drinking but whether or not the main water source was safe for cooking and drinking. This item excludes units where the primary source of household water was commercial bottled water.

**Sample size.** The sample size is the unweighted count of the actual sample cases. See Appendix B for an explanation of sample design.

**Savings.** See the definition “Amount of savings and investments.”

**Schools.** See the definitions “Educational attainment” and “Neighborhood conditions and neighborhood services.”

**Seasonal units.** See the definition “Vacancy, seasonality.”

**Secured communities.** These types of communities are typically residential communities in which public access by nonresidents is restricted, usually by physical boundaries, such as gates, walls, and fences, or through private security. These communities exist in a myriad of locations and development types, including high-rise apartment complexes, retirement developments, and resort and country club communities.

**Secured multiunits.** Secured multiunits refer to one or more buildings that contain multiunits that requires some sort of special entry procedure, such as entry codes, key cards, or security guard approval for access. This also includes intercom systems where the occupants can identify and buzz-in visitors.

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## Selected amenities.

*Porch, deck, balcony, or patio* is counted if it is attached to the sample unit, not just to the building or free standing. Porches may be enclosed or open. The porch, deck, balcony, or patio is only counted if it is at least 4 feet by 4 feet.

*Usable fireplace.* Excludes the following: fireplaces that have been blocked off or whose chimney or flue has been filled, decorative or artificial fireplaces and wood stoves, even if shaped like a fireplace, like a Franklin stove. Free-standing fireplaces are included in this item.

*Separate dining room.* A separate dining room is an area separated from adjoining rooms by archways or wall that extend at least 6 inches from an intersecting wall. See the definition "Rooms."

*Living rooms, recreation rooms, etc.* Includes family rooms, dens, recreation rooms and/or libraries.

*Garage or carport.* The garage or carport is only counted if it is on the same property, though not necessarily attached to the house. Off-street parking includes driveway or parking lot privileges that are paid for as part of the rent or owned with the unit. Data on garage or carport are not collected for occasional-use vacant units and other vacant units.

See also the definition "Overall opinion of structure."

## Selected deficiencies.

*Signs of mice or rats.* The statistics on signs of mice or rats refer to respondents who reported seeing mice or rats or signs of mice or rats inside the house or building during the 3 months prior to interview or while the household was living in the unit if less than 3 months. Signs of mice or rats include droppings, holes in the wall, or ripped or torn food containers.

*Holes in floors.* Respondents were asked about holes in the interior floors of the unit. The holes may or may not go all the way through to a lower floor or to the exterior of the unit. The holes are only counted if large enough for someone to trip in.

*Open cracks or holes (interior).* Statistics are presented on open cracks or holes in the interior wall or ceilings of the housing unit. Included are cracks or holes that do not go all the way through to the next room or to the exterior of the housing unit. Hairline cracks or cracks that appear in the walls or ceilings but are not large enough to insert the edge of a dime, are not counted. Very small holes caused by nails or other similar objects are also not counted.

*Broken plaster or peeling paint (interior).* The area of peeling paint or broken plaster must be on the inside walls or ceilings and at least one area of broken plaster or peeling paint must be larger than 8 inches by 11 inches.

*Electric wiring.* A housing unit is classified as having exposed electric wiring if the unit has any wiring that is not enclosed, either in the walls or in metal or plastic coverings. Excluded are appliance cords, extension cords, chandelier cords, and telephone, antenna, or cable television wires.

*Electric wall outlets.* A housing unit is classified as having rooms without electric wall outlets if there is not at least one working electric wall outlet in each room of the unit. A working electric wall outlet is one that is in operating condition; that is, it can be used when needed. If a room does not have an electric wall outlet, an extension cord used in place of a wall outlet is not considered to be an electric wall outlet.

**Senior citizen communities.** These communities are age-restricted, meaning that at least one member of the family must be at least 55 years old or older.

## Sewage disposal and sewage disposal breakdowns.

A *public sewer* is connected to a city, county, sanitary district, neighborhood, or subdivision sewer system, serving six or more units. A *septic tank or cesspool* is an underground tank or pit used for disposal of sewage (serving five or fewer units). A *chemical toilet*, which may be inside or outside the unit, uses chemicals to break down or dissolve sewage. Housing units for which sewage is disposed of in some other way are included in the *Other* category.

The data on breakdowns in the *means of sewage disposal* are limited to housing units in which the means of sewage disposal was a public sewer, septic tank, or cesspool. Breakdowns refer to situations in which the system was completely unusable. Examples include septic tank being pumped because it no longer perked, tank collapsed, tank exploded, sewer main broken, sewer treatment plant not operating as a result of electrical failure or water service interruption.

Data on breakdowns are shown if they occurred in the 3 months prior to the interview or while the household was living in the unit if less than 3 months, and if the breakdown lasted 6 consecutive hours or more. Housing units with a breakdown in sewage disposal also are classified according to the number of breakdowns.

**Sharing.** See the definitions "Cost and ownership sharing" and "Time sharing."

**Single children under 18 years old.** See the definition "Household composition."

**Site placement.** This item is collected for mobile homes. "Site" refers to location (other than the manufacturer's or dealer's lot) and not necessarily a manufactured/mobile home park site. The manufactured/mobile home was not necessarily occupied at each site, as long as it was set up for occupancy.

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**Source of drinking water.** The statistics presented are restricted to units where the respondents answered that their primary source of drinking water was not safe to drink. Units where the primary source of water was commercial bottled water were excluded. See the definition “Primary source of water.”

**Specified owner and renters.** See the definition “Monthly housing costs.”

**Square feet per person.**

*Books.* Square feet per person is computed for each single-family detached housing unit and mobile home by dividing the square footage of the unit by the number of people in the unit. The figures shown refer to the number of housing units having the specified square feet per person. Median square footage is rounded to the nearest foot.

*Microdata.* Not applicable.

**Square footage of unit.** Housing size is shown for single family detached housing units and mobile homes. Excluded from the calculation of square footage are unfinished attics, carports, attached garages, porches that are not protected from weather (such as screened porches), and mobile home hitches. Both finished and unfinished basements are included. Median square footage is rounded to the nearest foot. Square footage is based on the respondent’s estimate of the size of the unit.

**Stories between main and apartment entrances.** Data are presented for multiunit structures with two or more floors and are concerned with the number of floors from the main entrance level of the building to the main entrance of the unit. “Same floor” indicates that the main entrance of the sample unit is on the same level as the main entrance that residents use to enter the building.

**Stories in structure.** The statistics are presented for all housing units, except for mobile homes. Any basement is included, whether finished or not. Finished attics also are included; unfinished attics are not. For split levels and bilevels, the number of stories is determined by the highest number of floors that are physically over each other.

**Structure type of previous residence.** These data are shown for householders who moved within the United States during the previous 12 months. They are based on the respondent’s classification.

**Subsidies.** See the definition “Rent reductions.”

**Suburbs.** Suburbs are defined in the AHS as the portion of each metropolitan area that is not in any central city. See also the definitions “Central cities” and “Metropolitan areas.”

**Suitability for year-round use.** See the definition “Vacancy, seasonality.”

**Supplemental heating equipment.** Additional heating equipment for a heated area of the housing unit.

**Taxes.** See the definitions “Annual taxes paid per \$1,000 value” and “Real estate taxes.”

**Tenure.** Any housing unit is *owner occupied* (including a cooperative or condominium unit) if someone whose name is on the deed, mortgage, or contract to purchase, lives in the unit. Units where the elderly “buy” a unit to live in for the remainder of their lives, after which it reverts to the seller, are considered owner occupied. All other occupied housing units are classified as *renter occupied* units, including units rented for cash, if occupants or others pay some rent, and/or occupied without payment of cash rent, such as a life tenancy or a unit that comes free with a job. Households who do not pay cash rent may still pay utilities.

**Tenure of previous unit.** These data are shown for householders who moved within the United States during the 12 months prior to the interview. The previous unit was owner occupied if the owner or co-owner lived in the unit. All other previous units were renter occupied.

**Term of primary mortgage at origination or assumption.** Term is the number of years from the date the present owner-occupants first obtained the present mortgage to the date the last payment is due according to the terms of the contract. On a balloon mortgage this term may be short, and the last payment very large. In the books, medians for term of primary mortgage are rounded to the nearest year.

**Time sharing.** This item is restricted to vacant housing units, including units temporarily occupied by people who have usual residences elsewhere. Time sharing is a form of ownership in which a single property is owned by multiple owners. Each is entitled to occupy the unit for a limited period of time. The number of years of ownership may vary depending on the terms of the contract. Participants in time-sharing ownership usually, but not always, receive a deed of ownership.

**Total home equity line-of-credit limit.** Total home-equity line-of-credit limit is a mortgage loan that is usually in a subordinate position and allows the property owner to obtain multiple advances of the loan proceeds at the borrower’s discretion, up to an amount that represents a specified percentage of the borrower’s equity in a property. This line-of-credit allows the property owner to borrow against the equity in the home from time to time without reapplying for a loan.

**Total outstanding line-of-credit loans.** The total outstanding line-of-credit loan is the current balance on the home equity line-of-credit. The current balance is usually reported on the monthly or quarterly statement.

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**Total outstanding principal amount.**

*Books.* The statistics shown represent the total amount of principal that would have to be paid off if the loans were paid off in full on the date of interview. The formula used to calculate the outstanding principal amount does not take into account the fact that some households make additional principal payments. The resulting data, therefore, may be an overestimate of the total outstanding principal. In the books, medians for outstanding principal amount are rounded to the nearest dollar. The data include all regular mortgages and lump sum home equity, but exclude line-of-credit home equity loans.

*Microdata.* Not applicable.

**Trash, litter, or junk on streets or any properties.**

The respondent was asked if there was trash, litter, or junk in the streets, roads, empty lots, or on any properties within 300 feet of the building. Major accumulation includes tires, appliances or large amounts of trash accumulated over a period of time. Minor accumulation includes small amounts of paper, cans, or bottles that do not give the impression of long neglect. The property on which the sample unit is located is included.

**Trucks.** See the definition “Cars and trucks available.”

**Type of primary mortgage.** The federal government agencies that currently insure or guarantee mortgages or similar debts include the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Rural Housing Service/Rural Development (RHS/RD). Mortgage insurance is a promise to pay the lender’s losses in case the borrower fails to keep up the required mortgage payments and defaults on the loan. Such insurance protection is offered by the Government, acting as an insurance agent, and by private mortgage insurance companies. Mortgage loans that are not insured or guaranteed by these government agencies are referred to as “conventional” mortgages. Conventional mortgages, including mortgages insured or guaranteed by state or local governments, are shown as “Other types.”

**Types of mortgages.** See the definition “Mortgages currently on property.”

**Units.** See the definitions “Housing unit,” “Occupied housing units,” and “Vacancy, seasonality.”

**Units in structure.** In determining the number of housing units in a structure, all units, occupied and vacant, were counted. The statistics are presented for the number of housing units, not the number of residential structures. A structure either has open space on all sides or is separated from other structures by dividing walls that extend from ground to roof.

Structures containing only one housing unit are further classified as: detached if it has open space on all four sides, or attached if it has unbroken walls extending from

ground to roof that divide it from other adjoining structures, as in many rowhouses or townhouses. If a unit shares a furnace or boiler with adjoining units, then the walls are pierced by pipes or ducts, and all the units thus joined are included in one structure.

Manufactured/mobile homes are shown as a separate category (see the definition “Manufactured/mobile homes”).

**Urban and rural residence.** As defined for the 1980 and 1990 censuses, urban housing comprises all housing units<sup>1</sup> (a) in urbanized areas and (b) in *places* (see the definition “Place size”) of 2,500 or more inhabitants outside urbanized areas, but excluding housing units in the rural portions of extended cities.

Housing units<sup>1</sup> not classified as urban are rural housing.

*Urbanized areas.* In the 1980 and 1990 censuses, each urbanized area comprised an incorporated place and adjacent densely settled area (1.6 or more people per acre, or 1,000 or more people per square mile) that together had at least 50,000 population. It also included some less dense adjacent land such as industrial parks and golf courses inside city limits.

More information on urbanized areas and the historical development of the urban-rural definition appears in the 1980 Census of Population reports, *Characteristics of the Population, Number of Inhabitants*, PC80-1-A, and the 1990 Census of Housing reports, *General Housing Characteristics*, CH-1-1.

**Utilities.** See the definition “Monthly costs for electricity and gas.”

**Vacancy, seasonality.** A housing unit is vacant if no one is living in it at the time of the interview, unless its occupants are only temporarily absent. In addition, housing units where all the occupants have a usual residence elsewhere are grouped with vacant units.

*Year-round housing units.* This includes all units occupied by people as their usual residence, regardless of design, and all vacant units that are intended by the owner for occupancy at all times of the year. For example, if a unit in a resort area is intended for occupancy in all seasons, it is a year-round unit.

*For rent.* Owners of some units offer them for rent. Other owners solicit offers either *for rent* or *for sale*. When separate categories for these are not shown, they are both included in *for rent*, as in the rental vacancy rate.

*Rental vacancy rate.* The rental vacancy rate is the number of vacant year-round units for rent as a percent of the total rental inventory; i.e., all renter-occupied housing units and all year-round vacant housing units for rent or rented, not occupied.

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<sup>1</sup>1990 definition includes territory and population.

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**For sale only.** Units “for sale only” are offered for sale, and the owner does not solicit renter-occupants, even though the owner might eventually rent the unit.

**Rented or sold.** If any money rent has been paid or agreed upon, but the new renter has not moved in as of the date of the interview, or if the unit has recently been sold, but the new owner has not yet moved in, the unit is classified as rented or sold.

**Occasional use.** These are units held for weekend or other occasional use throughout the year. Second homes may be classified here or as seasonal.

**URE.** These are temporarily occupied by persons with Usual Residence Elsewhere. If all people in a housing unit usually live elsewhere, the unit is classified as vacant. For example, a beach cottage occupied at the time of the interview by a family that has a usual residence in the city is included in the count of vacant units. Their home in the city or the home of a comparable vacationing family also can be in the AHS sample and would be reported as occupied since the occupants are only temporarily absent. URE units also may be classified in any of the vacancy categories: seasonal or for sale.

**Other vacant.** This category includes units held for settlement of an estate, units held for occupancy by a caretaker or janitor, and units held for personal reasons of the owner.

**Seasonal units** are intended by the owner to be occupied during only certain seasons of the year. They are not anyone’s usual residence. A seasonal unit may be used in more than one season; for example, for both summer and winter sports. Published counts of seasonal units also include housing units held for occupancy by migratory farm workers. While not currently intended for year-round use, most seasonal units could be used year-round; see the next definition.

**Suitability for year-round use.** For vacant housing units that are not intended by their current owners for year-round use (seasonal and migratory), the respondent was asked whether the construction and heating of the housing unit made it suitable for the unit to be occupied on a year-round basis. A housing unit is suitable for year-round use if it is built as a permanent structure, properly equipped, insulated, and heated as necessitated by the climate.

**Time sharing.** This item is restricted to vacant housing units, including units temporarily occupied by people who have usual residences elsewhere. Time sharing is a form of ownership in which a single property is owned by multiple owners. Each is entitled to occupy the unit for a limited period of time. The number of years of ownership may vary depending on the terms of the contract. Participants in time-sharing ownership usually, but not always, receive a deed of ownership.

**Duration of vacancy** refers to the length of time (in months) from the date the last occupants moved from the housing unit to the date of the interview. The data, therefore, do not provide a direct measure of the total length of time that units remain vacant. For newly constructed units that have never been occupied, the duration of vacancy is counted from the date construction was completed. For recently converted or merged units, the time is reported from the date that conversion or merger was completed.

**Last used as a permanent residence.** The statistics refer to the length of time (in months) since units that are currently seasonal vacant were last used as a permanent residence, and is measured as of the date of interview. Units that have always been used for short-term or seasonal occupancy, are classified as *Never occupied as permanent home*.

**Comparability.** There may be differences between the AHS and other surveys that present vacancy rates. The differences may be attributed to such factors as differing interview periods, survey designs, survey techniques, and processing procedures, as well as differences in concepts and definitions. In addition, there are sampling and nonsampling errors.

**Value.** Value is the respondent’s estimate of how much the property (house and lot) would sell for if it were for sale. Any nonresidential portions of the property, any rental units, and land cost of mobile homes, are excluded from the value. For vacant units, value represents the sale price asked for the property at the time of the interview, and may differ from the price at which the property is sold. In the books, medians for value are rounded to the nearest dollar.

See also the definition “Ratio of value to current income.”

**Water.** See the definitions “Plumbing facilities,” “Primary source of water and water supply stoppage,” “Safety of primary source of water,” and “Source of drinking water.”

**Water leakage during last 12 months.** Data on water leakage are shown if the leakage occurred in the 12 months prior to the interview or while the household was living in the unit if less than 12 months. Housing units with water leakage are classified by whether the water leaked in from inside or outside the building and by the most common areas (roof, basement, walls, closed windows, or doors) or reasons (fixtures backed up or overflowed or pipes leaked) of water leakage.

**Work.** See the definitions “Income” and “Journey to work.”

**Worked at home last week.** This question determines who is working out of the office. This can include telecommuters (a company employee who works from home full or part time during normal business hours), real estate salesperson, teleworker, and any person who works at home on a regular job.

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**Worked at home last week for householder.** This question determines who in the household worked for the householder last week. The person may be a student, an elderly person related or not to the householder. The time worked may have been part time, even 1 or 2 hours last week. It includes baby sitting for pay, helping out in a family store or family farm, and similar work. Do not count as work the person's own housework or odd jobs around the house (painting the porch, cutting grass, etc.); unpaid babysitting for family, relatives, or friends; and unpaid volunteer work for a church, etc. Work done by residents of an institution are not considered work for the purpose of this survey. The time period covered is the full calendar week, from Sunday through Saturday, preceding the date the interview is completed.

**Year householder immigrated to the United States.** See the definition "Citizenship."

**Year householder moved into unit.** The data are based on the information reported for the householder and refer to the year of latest move. Thus, if the householder moved back into a housing unit previously occupied, the year of the latest move was to be reported. If the householder moved from one apartment to another in the same building, the year the householder moved into the present unit was to be reported. The intent is to establish the year present occupancy by the householder began. The year the householder moves is not necessarily the same year other members of the household move; although, in the great majority of cases the entire household moved at the same time. In the books, the median year householder moved into unit is rounded to the nearest year.

See also the definition "Year structure built."

**Year primary mortgage originated.** The year the primary mortgage was originated is the year the mortgage was signed (see the definition "Primary mortgage"). In the books, medians for year primary mortgage originated are rounded to the nearest year.

**Year structure built.** Year structure built represents the respondent's estimate of when the building was first constructed, not when it was remodeled, added to, or converted. The figures refer to the number of housing units in structures built during the specified periods and in existence at the time of the interview. For manufactured/mobile homes, the manufacturer's model year was assumed to be the year built. For manufactured/mobile homes, the year the householder moved in can be earlier than the year the structure was built because the manufactured/mobile home site, not the manufactured/mobile home itself, is in sample. The householder could have replaced an older manufactured/mobile home with a newer model. In the books, median year built is rounded to the nearest year.

**Year unit acquired.** The year the unit was acquired or inherited refers to the year in which the present owner acquired or inherited the house or apartment; for example, the year the contract was signed. This date may be different from the date when the occupants moved in. If the land and building were bought at different times, the year the building was acquired was recorded. If there was a land contract only, the year the contract was signed was recorded. In the books, median year acquired is rounded to the nearest year.